
SPOOK CROOKS!

*Exposing the Secrets of the Prophet-eers
Who Conduct Our Wickedest Industry*

BY

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Frontispiece of the Author

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Spook Crooks!

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO MY WIFE

ELIZABETH EULER PROSKAUER

WHO CONSTANTLY CLEANS OUT MY MAGIC CLOSET—
AND INVARIABLY THROWS OUT MY BEST TRICKS!

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INTRODUCTION

"Neither let there be found among you anyone that consulteth soothsayers . . . nor let there be anyone that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead. . . . For the Lord abhorreth all these things and for these abominations He will destroy them at their coming." *Deuteronomy*, Chap. 18, vs. 10-12 (Douay).

THIS book is about swindlers. Fascinating swindlers: men and women who practice the most contemptible form of deception. They take advantage of the misfortune of others. They are not like the cheerful grafters of the circus tent, who short-change the pleasure-seeking rustics; these fellows snatch up people who are perhaps in desperation, and then think nothing of taking their life's savings by means of a little adroit thimble-rigging. Card-sharpers and second-story men are upright citizens compared to the folk who exorcise their way through this volume.

These people are known as "Spook Crooks." That is the title of abuse conjurers and sincere spiritualists have bestowed on persons who sell predictions and advice from "supernatural" sources—fraudulent astrologers, crooked spirit mediums, fortune-tellers, numerologists. They catch about 30,000,000 people a year, and take \$125,000,000 away from them; in return for this comfortable livelihood they ruin many of their victims, cause the suicide of others, even drive some of them insane.

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In the chapters which follow, one finds described a little of the havoc which individual swindlers have left in their wake.

The Spook Crooks may be contemptible, but they are clever, colorful, and convincing. Their chief stock-in-trade is superstition, which in company with mysticism in one form or another has held the human race in bondage from the beginning of time. In every age the superstitious and credulous have been easy victims of the craft of the alleged prophets of that period. Yet, never in the history of mankind has there been such a wave of superstition and belief in the supernatural as now exists. The bearded cone-hatted diviners of the Middle Ages were bungling amateurs compared to the modern seers, the men and women you will find in this book.

The World War brought its aftermath of an increased belief in Spiritualism through mothers desiring "messages" from their sons who were killed in action. The widespread use of the radio made millions familiar with the involved pseudo-astronomical phraseology of the astrologer and the fantastic mathematical palaver of the numerologist.

Unemployment drove thousands to fortune tellers. The seers fattened on the last dollars of the unfortunates who asked only two questions, "Where can I find work"? and "When shall I be employed again?"

Just as the witch-doctor of the African tribes is believed to find the best hunting grounds through his weird and uncanny incantations, so are the 1932 fortune tellers supposed to "find" positions for the unemployed. Superstitions of the jungle inhabitant are not much different from those of the city dweller.

Everyone is a little superstitious down in his heart.

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How about you? Will you light three cigarettes with one match? Do you expect bad luck on Friday, the thirteenth? Or do you think it is *unlucky* to have superstitions? Even if you are not superstitious, perhaps you think it reasonable that the stars should have an influence on human affairs. And although you can plead "not guilty" on all these counts, remember how many tall buildings skip lightly from the twelfth to the fourteenth floor. The Spook Crooks' stock is an article of first quality, you see, and does not spoil with age.

The second asset of these swindlers is showmanship. You go to see them, because you think there *may* be something in it after all. Step by step, they build up to an emotional and nervous climax, where your reason loses all control; then they stop short, and tell you to come again to-morrow—the spirits can tell you no more to-day. You come to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow; until your money is gone. So is the fortune teller. According to your temperament and the amount of your losses, you keep sheepishly still, or you go to the police, or something gives way.

In 1931, there came to the attention of the authorities many suicides which were directly traceable to fortune tellers; how many people were sent to jails, asylums, or the poorhouse I cannot tell. Warden Lewis E. Lawes of Sing Sing prison wrote me he kept no records of how many of his charges were started on a criminal life by the vicious predictions of fortune tellers.

"But," you may say, "how do you know that it is all swindling? How do you know that the course of the stars or planets does not affect human affairs? How do you know that the dead cannot communicate with the living?" My answer is ready and simple. I *do not know*.

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I merely believe—but back my beliefs with undisputed facts.

The Smithsonian Institution issued an official pronouncement (June 31, 1931) to the effect that the future of individuals is not predictable by astrologers, spirit mediums or fortune tellers; statements such as "Astrology is the bunk," "Numerology is nothing but platitudinous piffle, and not an esoteric science," "The fallaciousness of astrology ceased to be debatable more than three hundred years ago," have come in droves from leading scientists; but I *do not know* if they *know*; but I *believe* they do.

I *do know* however that all the predictions of the future, whether by astrologers, spirit mediums, fortune tellers, or mind-readers, of which I have ever heard were false—and conscious chicanery. And the majority of these predictions were for the vilest of purposes, that of falsely obtaining money from the credulous.

In this book I have written down the stories of some typical victims, have told how the false prophets cheated them, what happened to them; and then I have explained the thimble-rigging mountebank tricks by which the fortune-teller contrived to perform miracles.

You will see how a simple piece of palming which any amateur conjurer can do, made a mother of two children kill herself; how an old side-show chemical trick made an eminent anthropologist lose his mind; how stock-brokers pay comfortable retaining fees for the privilege of being tipped off to worthless bucket-shop stocks. It is a long and sordid story, but it deserves to be told.

The characters in this book are real people, the swindlers (alas!) real swindlers; the means they use to get "messages from the dead," or to consult the stars,

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are the same tricks that charlatans have used for generations. Many of these tricks were the inventions of stage magicians, who used them for honest entertainment. The fortune tellers have stolen these tricks, and the public is sometimes prone to confuse the honest deceivers, the now-you-see-it-and-now-you-don't men, who give you an evening's genuine enjoyment,—with the low characters who use the same tricks to ruin their unfortunate visitors.

Largely for this reason, the Parent Assembly of the Society of American Magicians, an organization of legitimate entertainers, professional and amateur, recently started and won many notable victories in a campaign against fortune tellers, fake spirit mediums, and others claiming supernatural powers.

Through the work of the magicians' Press Bureau, of which I am chairman, I am able to write down the history of the unfortunate cases which follow. Our committee delved into the records of all the false seers on which it could lay its hands; experiences derived from the work of the former national president of the Society of American Magicians, the late Harry Houdini, world's most famous "ghost-breaker," were capitalized; and our efforts have culminated in the disbarment of all fortune tellers or other predictors of the future from the radio. For example, in March, 1931, there were 147 astrologers on the air; in March, 1932, there were four, at insignificant stations. Police Commissioner Edward P. Mulrooney of New York has been making grateful use of assistance from the magicians in clearing that metropolis of clairvoyants. All authorities have co-operated to enforce such laws against fortune tellers as exist, and the days of false prophets seem limited.

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The cases detailed in this book come from the records of many police courts, and from the files of the Press Bureau. The names and the cities in which the episodes occurred have been changed and disguised to spare the feelings of the victims, or in the cases of the suicides, to save the families from unhappiness. But the facts remain untarnished and correct.

I am particularly indebted to the President of Parent Assembly No. 1, Society of American Magicians, Mr. Bernard M. L. Ernst, Houdini's attorney and close friend, for his counsel and advice, as well as for access to Houdini's private records; to Mr. John Mulholland, one of the leading professional magicians, for an incredibly vast store of technical knowledge; to Mr. J. B. Mussey, author of many books on magic; to Mr. Howard Cushman of the New York Evening Post; to Messrs. Ernest Davids and M. Robert Herman, my fellow-members of the committee responsible for directing the drive against charlatans, for their time, assistance and advice; and to the members of the Society of American Magicians throughout the world for their co-operation and unselfish aid during the strenuous times when the campaign was under way.

THE AUTHOR.

New York
March, 1932.



SPOOK CROOKS!

CHAPTER I

THE GREAT BUDDHA

STARK melodrama rides out of the night into the heretofore placid lives of thousands for the Spook Crooks are abroad! Mounted on steeds of superstition they are sweeping ruthlessly across the horizon of men, women and adolescent youth leaving in their paths death, dishonor, poverty and disgrace.

These are not allegorical expressions. These are not sentences constructed in an attempt at fine writing. They are but the truth.

Unbelievable tales of fortune tellers' cupidity, diabolical cleverness and deceit have been assembled. There is no time or space for careful phrasing, for these stories of the Spook Crooks must pour forth to educate and alarm the citizenry.

Today, tomorrow, next week or next month, you and your families may come in contact with one of the more than 60,000 fortune tellers in America. You must be prepared to laugh at them, to expose them and to drive them out of town.

The case histories you read in this, the first complete exposé of fortune tellers, include the most startling effects of fake spirit mediums, astrologers, crooked mind readers and vicious fortune tellers ever written. Fiction stories? Hardly! Not one of them. For example, come with me to the "boom town" of Bigwells, Oklahoma.

We arrive in town just in time to see two women

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descend from a cheap and dilapidated automobile. They are dressed in that traditional Romany costume gypsies have worn for generations. As they get down we note a huge trailer attached to their car with a gigantic picture of Buddha painted on the sides. The driver is a swarthy type with fierce moustachios, in keeping with the picture.

Selecting a nearby policeman the taller of the two women addresses him. Let us move closer and hear what is said.

"Pardon, M'sieur. I look for location for my fortune telling office. Perhaps you help me and I read your palm and tell your fortune free."

The tall Irish officer grinned.

"Sure 'n' it's all the same to me what the fortune may be, but I'll help yiz anyway."

Introduced to a renting agent, the women quickly made a deal. Four hundred dollars a month for a shack. Money means nothing in an oil boom town—or to a successful fortune teller.

The following day saw a gaudy banner across the front of the house.

"MADAM ROSIKOFF. FORTUNE TELLER TO THE CZAR OF RUSSIA. LOVE PROBLEMS SOLVED. THE TRUTH ABOUT YOURSELF. PALMS READ. HAVE THE MYSTIC BUDDHA TELL YOUR FUTURE!"

Madam Rosikoff did a land office business. Not the cleverest woman in America but a smart one. The friend who came with her had told her there was no law in a boom town. She thought the fortune telling business must be good where there was no law, not that small fines of careless judges bothered her much anyway.

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For furnishing the money for the trip and as well as giving the tip about the possible profits, the friend wanted half the proceeds. Never was a fortune teller more unsuspecting. For the "friend" who made the trip with her was a "spotter" for a large oil company.

Time went on. The underlings of the oil fields were daily and nightly visitors. Some wanted their palms read. Others wanted to write messages to the mystic Buddha which was advertised to answer all questions privately.

This Buddha was the weirdest, most mysterious device that any one ever saw. According to Madam Rosikoff, the Czar himself had given her this statue of solid bronze.

One merely dropped questions in the metal bowl in the Buddha's lap and they were answered most mysteriously in any language. And as there were more than four dialects and languages spoken in the boom town, and no one man in town knew them all, the Buddha certainly was a Gift of the Gods, because no matter what language in which the questions were written, the Buddha answered them all.

There came a day when a "capper," one who is most essential in an oil operation, a man of unquestioned loyalty to his employers, visited the seeress.

A great future was assured him by the gypsy who read his palm, but besides that he wanted to ask the Buddha a private question, he said. He gladly paid the five dollar fee, and with the fortune teller entered the room in which the statue stood.

He wrote a message on an ordinary piece of paper. He handed it to Madam Rosikoff who dropped it in the bowl. She stepped back, took a long black stick, and stirred the papers in the bowl.

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Bowing low before the huge statue she began a weird chant. Suddenly she broke off, picked up a piece of incense and ignited it. As she did so, from the mouth of the solid bronze statue, in a stentorian voice came the words:

"It would not be disloyal to your employers if you bought stock in the X Oil Company."

The "shooter" left the room elated, as well as amazed, for the question he had written was:

"We shot the No. 4 well this afternoon and it came in at twenty thousand barrels, but we capped it before the news got out. Would it be wrong for me to buy stock in the X Company?"

Madam Rosikoff showed her "silent partner" the question after the "capper" left the house, and laughed. The partner left and hurried to the telegraph station. Wiring her Oklahoma City employers she considered her "work" done. She had found out what she wanted.

All the floating supply of the X company stock was bought up privately before the stock exchange opened on the following day. Then the market was depressed for a few days. Poor people who should have been "in" on the profits were frozen out, having sold their stock for a song. Then the news of the gusher came out. Millions were made in a skyrocketing market by the manipulators.

All because of a fortune teller.

Not very exciting, you say, except to point out the gullibility of an oil man who gave away an employer's secret?

All right, let's follow Buddha to another town.

You want to know how Buddha works? Why, by the supernatural powers of Madam Rosikoff!

* * * *

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Here we are in Oilville. The madam's banners are flying. Crowds are flocking to the fortune teller. A golden shower of oil money is flowing into her coffers. Suckers? Harmless amusement?

Geraldine Summers was frantic. She had come to Oilville eight months ago with her little daughter Barbara and her husband Eddie. Geraldine was not quite twenty-two, Eddie twenty-four. Just a pair of kids themselves.

Eddie had a "swell job." He handled the nitro. A real "shooter," that lad. He knew just when to "blow" the well. Got big money, too. \$125.00 a week. Shooters really get paid. He and "Gerry" were certainly happy.

But shooters don't live long if they get a bad break. Eddie did. They took what was left of him to the combination undertaker and furniture man and went to tell Gerry that Eddie was a "game guy." But that did not help the girl-mother. Barbara had to eat. She didn't care so much about herself as she did about Babs.

The thousand-odd Eddie had left, and the twenty-five hundred the company gave, wouldn't last forever. As a matter of fact it was fast disappearing for money doesn't last long in a boom town.

Then along came Madam Rosikoff and the mystic Buddha who "knows all—tells all." What a break for Gerry. Also for the fortune teller.

Gerry was ushered into the presence of the gigantic bronze deity. As the fortune teller burned a joss stick, the girl-widow wrote a message to Eddie.

"Tell me, dear, what shall I do with the money you left and that which the company gave me?"

The answer came quickly from the Buddha, loud and clear:

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"Nothing yet, dear. Come back and consult me again tomorrow."

Gerry went home to Babs somewhat comforted and startled that Eddie could talk to her through the Buddha.

On the morrow Gerry returned. Taken before the statue she knelt and prayed as Madam Rosikoff had told her.

Her reveries were interrupted with a voice that seemed to come from the very mouth of the Buddha itself.

"I am the reincarnated spirit of your husband. I will watch over you and keep you from harm. As you prayed I heard you. For Babs' sake and mine, entrust your money to Madam Rosikoff. Come often to pray in this room and I will return and talk with you. Good-by, dear!"

With a sob Gerry fell over in a dead faint. Revived, she explained what had happened.

"It really was Eddie's voice," she said.

Half running, half walking, Gerry hastened home. Here she grabbed Babs, kissed her, murmured that sort of love talk only a young mother knows, and waltzed to her bedroom. Here she lifted the mattress, extracted the two worn stockings in which she kept her money and went back to Madam Rosikoff as fast as she could go.

Delivering the \$3,600.00 to the fortune teller she went back home.

Yes, you've guessed it. In the morning Gerry discovered that Madam Rosikoff had moved.

When she recovered from a swoon, she found herself in the hospital. While there physicians told her what she had long suspected, that some day Babs would have a brother or sister.

She smiled, went home and told Babs, who, being but

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two years old, couldn't understand much through the tear choked voice.

Interesting story? Yes? You haven't heard the end. For in the morning when police came to get Gerry to sign a formal complaint against Madam Rosikoff, what do you think they found?

You're right. Seated in a little arm chair, with Babs at her breast, was Gerry. Her golden curls would never again play a part in "Goldilocks." Her blue eyes would never smile again. For she was still and stark in death. Police opened the doors and windows so the gas would be blown out.

Not a note was left. Not a single scrap of paper the courts would call evidence against the fortune teller.

Madam Rosikoff—you are not interested in her any longer? She should be in jail for murder? Surely. No doubt of that. But try and prove her guilt!

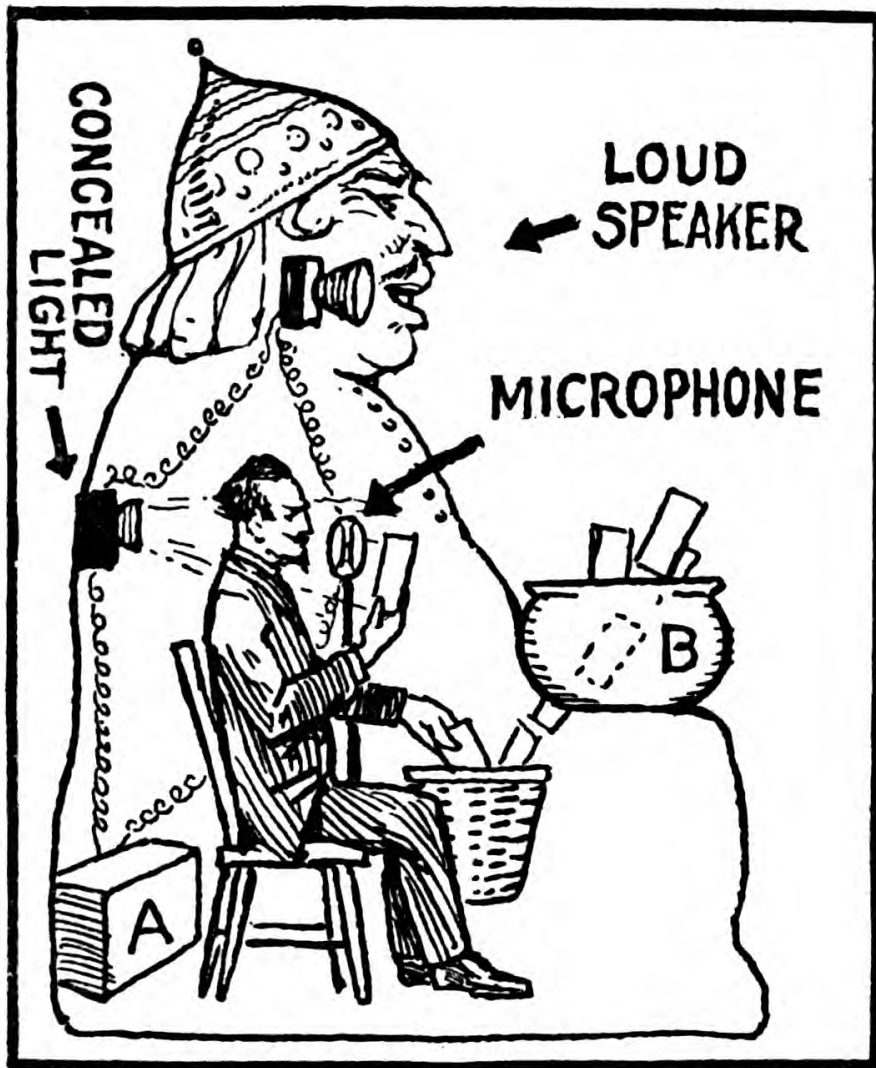
What? Certainly. That's what this book should do. Expose the "racket" and protect the innocent, credulous and superstitious. Fortune tellers may beat the law—but they can't beat the bright light of publicity that shows up their dastardly tricks.

Here is how the Buddha works. The "*solid* Buddha" isn't—it's just a shell. But it is so constructed that certain places, when hit with a hammer or other heavy object, give off the sound of solidity.

When the messages are dropped in the bowl, they fall through into a basket held by an assistant! All he has to do is to open them and read them by the illumination given by an "Eveready Wall-Lite." This light is self-contained and needs no outside wiring connections. Batteries supply the light.

A "public address" system of wireless is used to make

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THE "GREAT BUDDHA" EXPOSED!

A hidden public address system gives the effect of the great Buddha speaking. The questions dropped in the bowl (B) fall through into the basket. The "Spook Crook" reads them and broadcasts them through the public address system (A).

the Buddha "speak." The assistant talks into the microphone and his voice, amplified and changed, comes out of the mouth. As the Buddha is almost twice the size of a man, to the ignorant, superstitious and credulous, its very massiveness is impressive.

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This is not a stage trick and is never used by magicians. It has been used in small imitation spiritualistic halls with great effect. Questions are answered on payments of any sum from 50c to \$50.00 for a "life reading," this latter being the reciting of a boiler plate horoscope.

The Madam Rosikoff of the story has been working the "Buddha racket" for some time. That of course is not her name. Madam Rosikoff's husband, speaking practically all continental European languages, was at the microphone when the two incidents mentioned took place.



CHAPTER II

JUST EPISODES

I

HEREIN are related seven episodes of fortune tellers' wiles. They are tales of unbelievable credulity, tales of loss of life, money and honor. Ghosts, "cures" and feats, sleight of hand, which read ridiculously simple when explained, but incredibly clever in operation, are explained in detail.

* * * *

NICHOLAS DEMPOLIS was so happy at the thought of going back to his home in Greece that he forgot momentarily the throbbing pain of his rheumatism. He would be homeward bound in just a few more days.

Twenty-two years of savings had brought him sixteen thousand dollars, which he had sent back to Athens little by little, and he had more than two thousand dollars cash in the house with which to buy his steamship ticket and presents for his relatives. He was in a benign mood.

Tomorrow he'd go to the steamship ticket agent and then to New York for a few days' visit with his cousin Popolocatus, who had a fine fruit stand near the Grand Central Station. Truly America was a great land.

But now that pain again. He'd have to do something about it, but what? He'd tried various things, but a few doses of medicine couldn't take out the aches that had

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come from years of standing on cold piers in the early morning waiting for banana boats from South America. Why, even Dr. Anchovius, the famous physician, hadn't helped him much.

Ah, well, a few days in sunny Greece would cure him. Mentally he was picturing the grapevines on his Athenian plateau, his family about him.

The doorbell rang. Painfully Nicholas got up, pressed the buzzer that opened the downstairs door of his apartment house, and wonderingly waited his visitor.

It was Nick Haskolopious, his former partner, who had bought out his interest in the fruit store.

"Hello Nick."

"Hello, Nick, yourself."

"Greetings to you. What brings you here, my partner of other days?"

"I passed a place on Vine Street that had a sign in its window that said any kind of troubles or sickness could be cured. It's a gypsy medicine maker. I thought of your troubles and came to you."

"Thank you my friend. Where was it? I would try anything." Haskolopious told him. So Nick set out for the gypsy medicine maker's.

The dim light on the street corner threw in relief a gaudily painted sign reading:

STERGO SEER
ARE YOU IN TROUBLE OR BAD HEALTH?
ADVICE ON LOVE, BUSINESS OR SICKNESS
READINGS \$1.00 UP

Nick was admitted to a dingy parlor by a young woman dressed in the Roumanian costume affected by

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all fortune telling gypsy women. He seated himself painfully and awaited Stergo.

A woman came in. Her face was heavily lined with age, her beaklike nose jutted out from thin, high cheek bones.

"Man, you want to see me?" she said in hesitating tones.

"Yes, lady," Nick told her. "I gotta pain and I want help."

"You have come to right place. Come to this little table and I will read your palm."

Seated at the table, the old crone took Nick's hand and muttered a lot of indistinct gibberish. She stopped. The silence was intense for a moment, then the fortune teller broke the stillness with her cracked, rasping voice.

"I see you are a man from 'nother country. You not be American, but be here some time. You want to go home soon, yes."

"How did you know that?" Nick broke in. "You must be——"

"You came here to see what is matter with your health. Not so?"

Nick was deeply impressed. He'd forgotten that he had told her he had a pain when he came in the room. Of such things are fortune tellers' successes made!

"Cure my pain," Nick pleaded.

"All right, you give me five dollars and I cure you."

Nick paid. The old crone told him to wait and hobbled out of the room.

She returned in a few minutes with a bottle of greenish-looking liquid and told Nick to rub it where the pain was most severe, and to return the following day.

Nick went home, rubbed the aching spots, and felt

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better almost immediately. He retired and slept through the night and awoke without his customary pains. The gypsy must be good, he thought.

He returned to her the following day for more medicine, and while there met a fellow Greek in the reception room. To him, in his native tongue, he confided the facts of his return home and was amazed to hear that his countryman had been treated by the fortune teller and was completely cured. The stranger said:

"Yes, and Mrs. Stergo also got me a magic charm when she cured me. What she did was to have me put a lot of money in a handkerchief and I put the whole thing in a box and after three days, when I opened the box, the money was there and with it the magic charm. Since that day I never have had a bit of trouble."

Conversation broke off here, for the seeress came into the room. She asked Nick how he felt. Then she invited him into another room. She told Nick that if he would bring her a thousand dollars or more she would make the money work as the cure for his troubles, and the more money he brought the quicker the cure would be wrought.

Nick said he only had two thousand dollars and needed that for a trip to the old country. Mrs. Stergo explained that made no difference, as her cure didn't take the money away. So Nick decided to try this new type of "magic cure."

When he left he carried with him another bottle of green fluid. When he reached home he rubbed some more on the rheumatic aches, and the relief this brought convinced him that he was taking no chances with his funds.

Therefore he went to the bank and withdrew his balance. As he had already told the bank officials that he

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was leaving the country for good, the withdrawal made no impression, other than to bring him many good wishes and farewells.

He returned to the fortune teller's home and was greeted at the door by the soothsayer herself. She conducted him into a room. There was a table and two chairs, and no other furnishings being visible, for the old lady stated, "If we have other chairs maybe bad spirits occupy them and knock good spirits away. This way, two chairs, you and me have them, no one else be here for they have nowhere to sit down."

This childlike logic impressed Nick. They sat down and the crone brought out a metal box about four inches high, three inches long and six inches across. Attached to this was a heavy key that hung on a piece of rawhide.

"This be magic box," Mrs. Stergo announced. "You bring out your money, put it in your handkerchief, put in box, and take the whole box with money into bed with you. You be cured in two days. Three days it takes when only one thousand dollars be used, or two days when two thousand dollars."

Nick took out his two thousand dollars and tied it in the end of his handkerchief, as shown by the fortune teller, who moved the box to the center of the table. Taking the key, which was on a rawhide thong, she opened the box and turned it with the opened cover toward her. She then told Nick to place his money-stuffed handkerchief in the box. As he started to do so, she took it from him and visibly placed it in the box herself with one hand, the other hand being under the table.

As the handkerchief was almost entirely out of sight she swung the box about and told Nick to lock the box himself. Nick pushed the bundle, craftily feeling to

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see if his money was still in it. He felt a bulge and was sure everything was well. He closed the cover, locked the box, and hung the key around his wrist.

"You pay me now," the fortune teller said, "the price of the box—ten dollars—and also five dollars for the medicine you had earlier today. Then on the second day from now come back here and pay me one hundred dollars for the cure."

Nick was glad to agree to this and paid the fifteen dollars demanded. With the box under his arm in a deathlike grip, the happy Greek left the house.

The two days passed slowly. Nick's rheumatism bothered him, but he supposed it would be all cured as soon as the time was up. Finally the two days had passed. He could hardly wait to open the box. He inserted the key and threw open the cover. Pulling out the handkerchief he was shocked to find only some newspapers cut to the size of money fly into the air. He looked for his money, but not a trace of a greenback could be found.

Rushing to the gypsy's house he found the sign gone and the house unoccupied. Realizing what had happened, he dashed to the nearest police station and related his story.

"Handkerchief switch," the detectives said laconically as they conducted Nick to the warrant officer where he swore out a warrant.

But the gypsy had vanished and the warrant still reposes unserved in police headquarters at Philadelphia, in the shadow of Independence Hall. And Nick had to postpone his trip home.

Without the metal box it would have appeared to have been the customary "Handkerchief switch" theft as described in detail in Chapter VI.

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But the metal box was a new racket, so the author investigated the story of Nick.

In the first place, the Greek Nick met at the fortune teller's was an accomplice. The police showed the table



HOW NICK WAS CAUGHT!

Metal "fake bottom" box rests over a hidden trap in table. Gypsy places handkerchief "A" containing valuables into box but it falls down into the trap, through opening in the box caused when panel "D" is opened. Gypsy forces up a substitute handkerchief "B," and closes panel with a movement of her body. The cover of box "C," is kept up to hide substitution of handkerchief.

that the gypsy had used. It was a marvel of mechanical perfection.

Probably she figured the two thousand dollars she got from Nick was sufficient pay for her to leave it behind, otherwise she would have taken it with her.

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The metal box, which rests on the table, has a sliding bottom. While the fortune teller kept the visitor's attention on her right hand, her left hand had pulled out the slide of the metal box and also released the trapdoor in the table top. Note the diagram on page 30.

As she dropped the handkerchief with the money presumably into the box, but actually through the trap into a compartment, her left hand was pushing the handkerchief of cut newspapers up into the box.

After the exchange was made and the trap quickly and silently closed, all she had to do was to hand the dupe the box and let him lock it himself.

The green mixture that had made Nick feel better, after analysis proved to be a liniment, sold by the millions of bottles, for rheumatism. It simply brought temporary relief. But, of course, it prepared Nick to be an easy victim.

II

HELENE MARSDEN lived with her husband, a contractor in a small town outside of Los Angeles. The Marsdens had a comfortable house; Helene had a maid to help her, and had two sons and a daughter.

Early in January of this year Helene met an old friend, Sarah Bellow, from her home in Ohio, who said that she had come to California looking for a wonderful clairvoyant. This man, denying he was a true believer in spiritualism, Sarah said, brought spirit music out of the air. The seer had vanished, according to her story, but Sarah had traced him to the city where Helene lived.

The name of the medium—no other name is known in the light of further events—was Hart Andos. The story Sarah related was to the effect that Andos had been

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a great musician, but had lost his arms in a railroad accident. While he was recovering in an Ohio hospital his room was suddenly filled with music, from violins, guitars, banjos, and other instruments. No explanation was found until a Cleveland spirit medium visited the hospital and heard the music. He pronounced it the work of spirits, she explained.

Sarah further said Andos had brought her many messages from her dead husband, but had moved to California.

That was why she was in town, for she wanted Andos to get a new message from her husband. She wanted to know how to proceed in certain personal matters for, she said, previous advice from her dead husband, that Andos had received in her behalf, had turned a certain real estate deal to her great advantage.

Helene offered Sarah the hospitality of her house while she remained in town, and Joe Marsden, although stating privately to Helene that he took no stock in the story of the miracles, agreed to let her chum of school days remain.

A few days sped by, when Sarah announced that she wanted Helene to visit him. So together they went to see him.

Sarah explained that she wished an immediate seance. Andos was willing, so both girls and the medium retired to a large, heavily curtained room.

The medium sat down at a huge old dining room table, and the women took seats on either side of him.

"I want to point out that most of the music which you will hear will be well known Christian hymns," he explained. "It will be music played by mysterious instruments, the like of which you have never heard."

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"I will not completely darken the room, but will have illumination from the floor lamps throw some light on the table. I am now ready to proceed. Place your hands on the table, press heavily and be silent while I commune with the dead. Shortly you will hear the clear tinkle of these unearthly musical instruments playing favorite selections. As the first hymn ends, ask me what you will."

Silence reigned. The women's hands were white and bloodless as they pressed hard on the table. Andos had both armless sleeves in full view.

Suddenly there came the strains of "Silent Night, Holy Night." The slow, reverent music came from the very center of the table; from under their hands! It was unbelievable!

The music ceased.

"Ask your questions now," the seer commanded.

Sarah did.

"Shall I buy any of the ten stocks that my broker advises?"

The room was again filled with the sweetest music. "Onward Christian Soldiers" was being played softly, yet with great volume. Helene was filled with the dread of the unknown. Sarah seemed intent on the medium's answer.

"Buy no stocks now," he said, "for there are troublesome times ahead in Europe. Stocks will fall, nations will tremble, and later on you will be able to buy securities at much lower prices."

"May I ask something?" Helene whispered to Sarah.

"Certainly."

"I want to . . ."

As Helene started to speak the music changed into a rollicking march.

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"Please tell me if my brother is alive," Helene gasped.

The strains of Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" almost drowned out the medium's answer.

"Your brother lies with the honored dead in France, but his spirit bids me tell you all is well with him."

Helene's smothered scream seemed to wake the medium from his trance. Helene really had lost a brother in service. He had been reported "Missing in Action." The music stopped. The room was deathly still.

With labored breathing, speaking jerkily, Andos directed Sarah to pull up the blinds. As the light filled the room from the afternoon sun, Helene stared about to see if there was a radio or phonograph in the room. Reading her thoughts, the medium said, "Please examine the room for radio wires, concealed speaking trumpets, phonographs, or anything that will explain the psychic phenomena you have seen."

The girls looked the room over, Helene in a half frightened, half skeptical manner. She even knocked on the walls to see if they were hollow. Convinced that they were all solid, and that nothing was concealed that could have produced the music, she was more awed than ever.

She paid the medium a fee of ten dollars and left with Sarah.

That evening, when Joe came home from his office, she related her experiences and begged him to go with her to another session.

Joe reluctantly consented to accompany the woman to a session the following night. He met Andos. As a contractor, he did more than tap the walls to see if they were solid. He thumped them. He peered out of the windows to see if there were loud speaker connections. After he was satisfied, the medium took his seat.

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"Tonight we will have to use flash lights," he said. "There is no gas or electricity in the room. If there were light sockets, chandeliers, or connections of any kind, you might suspect the music that was heard was earthly radio and not spiritual."

And then the same performance, with the same inexplicable music, took place, and Helene's brother in spirit gave many family details to confirm his authenticity.

Joe was half convinced and promised to come again. The fame of Andos and his spirit music spread through the town. Soon every one was flocking to his seances.

* * * *

Early in September of this year a newspaper headline stated:

KILLS SELF BECAUSE OF SEER'S CURSE

Helene Marsden, 38-Year-Old Mother of
Three, Takes Poison to Escape
Wrath of Fortune Teller

To the writer, in his capacity of Chairman of the Press Bureau, Parent Assembly No. 1, Society of American Magicians, came clippings telling the bitter story.

Queries to a reporter in the city wherein the suicide took place brought forth a story of cunning and viciousness.

It seemed that Helene had developed a small cyst on her breast which doctors thought might be an ulcer or boil. But Helene, by then under Andos's spell, showed the sore to the man, and asked his advice. He pronounced it cancer (while in a trance), saying the spirits had told him so.

He further ordered her to come to him for treatment

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regularly—"spirit healing" he called it. Helene did, without telling her husband. From March until September she went four times a month, paying ten dollars a visit. Helene told her husband she was spending the money for doctor's treatments for the cyst.

Early in September Joe decided to take Helene to another doctor, for the cyst showed no signs of abating. Helene went reluctantly. After the examination, the doctor said emphatically that the sore was nothing serious and there was no need to go to any one for further treatment. He gave her a salve and said that would stop the trouble.

The following day, Helene, in fear and trembling, went to the seer. She explained she was going to stop coming, as the doctor said there was nothing seriously wrong with her.

The fortune teller rose in terrible indignation and put the "curse of Arradaba" on her and her whole family. Helene, terrified, sobbing, ran home.

Rushing to the bathroom she took a bottle of carbolic acid and drained its contents. Her piteous cries for help brought the police and a city ambulance.

On her death bed, with her head in her husband's arms, she told the story of what had led to her unhappy act.

Let the authorities' official report tell the story:

"To the Commanding Officer, Detective Bureau:

"Following up Mrs. Marsden's deathbed statement we went to the house where Andos lived. We found him and arrested him on a charge of prescribing medicine without a license, fortune telling, and obtaining money under false pretenses.

"We attempted to book him as an accessory to a homicide, but the district attorney said this charge would not hold.

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"Careful search of the house disclosed the source of the secret music that caused Mrs. Marsden and others to fall victims to this faker's fraud.

"Under the table on which the sitters place their hands, was an old style Swiss music box. From that came this spirit music. There are four separate disks held under the table in alignment with a metal arrangement which lets the operator change them almost without a motion by using his knee.

"The fact that Andos hadn't any arms (a fact verified by the police surgeon when we booked him) kept suspicions from him.

"On the way to the station house the music box fell from the police wagon and was somewhat damaged. I think that this music box was the same one used by Florence Rose, that fortune teller we pinched last year. She recovered the box after she was fined. This box will never do anyone any good again.

"Respectfully submitted,

"HARRIS, *Lt. Com. Det. Bureau.*"

"Music from the air" is one of the most common of all methods of impressing victims. The music box method, the radio phonograph method and the concealed musician are the three methods most commonly used. No sincere and genuine medium has *ever* produced "spirit music" for a body of psychic phenomena investigators.

* * * *

III

HERE IS an interesting letter:

"Thank God for the good work the magicians and you are doing in exposing these terrible fortune teller fakers. I was a body welder at the Detroit — Plant, next in line for promotion to foreman, when I met a Mrs. — who was introduced to me as a great medium.

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"To make a long story short she did many things that got me half batty with messages coming to me from the spirits on paper which I wrote my name on. This absolutely blank paper with nothing on but by own signature, this medium would wave about in the air over a stove in her kitchen, or maybe over a candle, and real messages came.

"Well, I got so I went to her house almost every night on the way home and every Tuesday payday, I always went and gave her half or more of my pay. I know you'll think I am crazy, or was crazy because I don't go any more, but it got so that my wife wouldn't talk to me and finally went home to her mother.

"After she left me I began to drink pretty bad, we are near the Canada border, so I lost my job because Mr. — won't have drinkers about. Well, I got the bugs from the liquor and went to the — Hospital as a police case because I slugged a cop when I was drunk. When I got well, the judge pardoned me, when I told my story, with a suspended sentence, and the cops went after the medium but she had moved.

"Now I am out of a job doing only what work I can get, have not got my wife or little girl back, and all because of this faker. I hope you truly get after them all.

"Yours truly,

"Edward C——."

"P. S. I know those spirit messages were fakes, but how were they done?"

The author checked the statements in the above letter with police and hospital authorities and it was the confirmation, from the judge who suspended sentence, which just came which proved its authenticity. The facts in

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the letter are substantially true and are passed on here for the reader's consideration.

Back of this letter is a story that needs no words, a story of disaster, wrecked home, poverty, loss of position, trouble, and calamity.

There are two reasons for reproducing the letter. First, to show the damage done a hard working man of good reputation, and, second, because the question. "How were the fake messages done?" brings to mind the fact that thousands of fortune tellers are working with invisible inks to bring "messages from the spirits."

To start with, it is obvious, even to an untrained observer, that any messages which appear on blank paper come there because of some material method. Spirits don't write messages. Hence there is only one solution of the mystery: some kind of chemical is used.

Herewith are ten chemical compounds used for invisible writing together with the methods of applying them.

Method I.—One of the best methods of making writing invisible is to write with a concentrated solution of caustic potash. Use a new pen and write as finely or broadly as you wish. Let the paper dry and writing is absolutely invisible until strong heat is applied. Incidentally, many spies during the world war wrote messages underneath ordinary correspondence with caustic potash, for it is easy to obtain at any drug store.

Method II.—Procure some rose-colored paper. Write on it with a solution of cobalt chloride. The writing fades on drying, becomes visible in deep blue when heated, and disappears again when cool.

Method III.—Buttermilk or ordinary milk makes excellent invisible ink, although the former is better. Write

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MESS

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what you please on unglazed paper with the buttermilk, let dry, and it can be developed out later with a hot flat iron.

Method IV.—A little known fact is that the juice of lemons, onions, leek, cabbage or artichokes make excellent invisible inks. Simply dip the pen in the juice of any one. When the writing is dry, the characters become strongly visible when the paper is waved over a hot lamp or stove. This method has been used by convicts to smuggle out messages from jails.

Method V.—Another war time invisible ink is made of ammonium hydrochlorate in the proportion of fifteen parts of one hundred. Any druggist will make this up for you. The writing of this solution becomes visible when held over a stove, or (as women spies did in the war), when passed through a heated hair curler.

Method VI.—A slightly alcoholic solution of copper bromide makes a good invisible ink, as the writing becomes visible without need of too much heat, and also fades away quickly as the paper cools. Many a chemical student has used this method to write his best girl when her father objected to his young devotions.

Method VII.—A pretty invisible ink is made of nickel chloride and nickel nitrate in weak solutions. The writing from these chemicals becomes green by heating.

Method VIII.—A weak solution of mercury nitrate becomes black on the paper when heated. This method is used where the invisible messages must stay for quite a period. It makes the characters appear in a heavy black color.

Method IX.—This is probably the most popular war time method and was used by the spies because the paper destroys itself, after the message is read. Take some

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ordinary sulphuric acid. Reduce it with water until the lines of the pen are not visible on the paper after two minutes. Then write your full message. After the heat is applied and the characters become visible, the acid eats and destroys the paper.

Method X.—This is known as a reagent method, no heat being needed. Use a weak solution of lead acetate, made by reducing the chemical in distilled water. (Your druggist will make a bottle of it for you.) Write your message. It is absolutely invisible in two minutes, and neither heat, light nor water will make it visible. A solution of alkaline sulphide powder poured over the paper is all that will bring the writing to view.

There are many formulas and methods of using invisible inks, but these ten are in most common use with mediums. Never believe your own eyes if a fortune teller makes "writing appear with the aid of the spirits." The "spirits" he talks of must be in the chemicals.

Mr. ——'s letter is answered. It's too bad he did not have the knowledge of invisible inks that you now have.

IV

To A small Western town of about eighteen thousand inhabitants, early this year came one who called himself "Rajah Remarkable." He advertised in the local papers, claiming to be an "Oriental Seer and Spirit Medium."

One of his advertisements, a large spread in heavy black type, carried this amazing message to the world:

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

**Rajah Remarkable, Oriental Seer and Medium,
Tells Exactly What You Want to Know—**

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REVEALS FACTS ABOUT SWEETHEARTS,
HUSBANDS, WIVES

Business and Other Problems Solved

SEE ME

I Reveal the Proper Steps to Take to Insure
Happiness

READINGS, \$3.00

Among the readers of this ad was Alice Andrews, pretty, petite, twenty-two, daughter of a prominent local attorney. She was madly in love with George Carter, son of "ol' Doc" Carter, the country practitioner who had brought Alice into the world.

Alice wasn't so sure that George returned her love, for early that week George had taken Mabel Harris to a dance to which she herself had "just been dying" to go.

She decided to ask the Rajah about George.

Alice almost ran the entire distance to the Rajah's "Salon of the Orient." Entering, she was greeted by a huge turbaned Negro, who salaamed and bade her to wait; but it was not long before she was conducted into the private sanctum of the seer.

Here she found an oriental setting, in the center of which was an ordinary table covered with a number of slates, tablets, incense burners, and some small pieces of regular drawing paper. The seer sat at one end of the table, and Alice was told to occupy the seat at the other end.

Alice was upset and excited, although outwardly calm. Creepy, uncanny and spooky feelings ran up and down her back as the Rajah's penetrating eyes pierced her. Yet nothing he said was out of the ordinary.

As the Rajah gave her one of the pieces of drawing

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paper, he let his eyes rest on her hand, stating in a deep voice:

"Write your name at the top of the paper. Put your address and age underneath. Then the month of your birth, and directly under that write the questions closest your mind and heart."

With these words he handed Alice a pencil and stood up. As he walked away from the table he commanded her to write only so long as his back was turned. Alice did as she was told and, after writing, called the Rajah back to the table.

Resuming his seat directly opposite her, he told her to fold the paper in half and then again, and place it in the center of the table. This done, Alice leaned back in awe as the seer picked it up between two fingers and deftly carried it to his forehead with his right hand, placing his left hand on his other temple.

He called her by name, and said George did love her, but he needed to ask the spirits just what should be done to make him propose. This first session cost only three dollars, but for a more complete "reading," in which "spirits were involved," the fee was ten dollars. Alice left, much impressed, because the seer had called her by name and had most impressively stated that George did love her.

Returning the next day with the ten dollars, she was ushered into the same room and felt that uncanny nearness of the mysterious. The Rajah gave her two slates to wash, without any preliminaries. Then she was told to place a piece of chalk between them and tie them together.

The Rajah seemed to be working rapidly—"urged by the spirits," he said.

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After the slates were tied, with the chalk between, he gave Alice a roll of adhesive tape and told her to seal the slates together and mark her initials on the tape to identify the slates. Then he took them from her and placed them underneath the table.

His movements grew faster and faster, then suddenly he grew languorous. He asked Alice to "concentrate on George" while he went in a trance.

After a few minutes of "conversation with the spirits" he brought the slates from underneath the table and had Alice unseal them.

Lo and behold, in rather shaky writing, but legible, appeared these words: *I am Alice's grandmother. In George's heart is a place for her, but not yet. Ask me again in three days.*

Alice was paralyzed with amazement and much impressed. She paid the ten dollars and left, happy and content in her belief in the Rajah.

She came again and again, waiting for the right message, until finally, after her money gave out, she told her father, a lawyer, of her visits and asked for more funds. Luckily, he investigated, with the result Rajah Remarkable was run out of town. The father did not wish to prosecute because of the publicity it would bring to Alice.

A famous magician and former college professor, was lecturing on magic and physics at a college in this town some days later when he met Alice's father, who told him the whole story. While Mr. Andrews knew the thing was a fake and of the worst kind, he did not know how it was done. The Press Bureau wrote him a complete explanation of the fraud.

"There are thousands of cases like that of Alice's," we wrote, "for cold statistics show us that more than

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\$125,000,000 is given up by a credulous public yearly to fortune tellers, fake mediums and clairvoyants who pretend to read the future or receive messages from the spirit world. In New York alone about \$60,000,000 is the gain of these frauds who prey on superstitious or gullible people.

"According to the records of various police departments, one finds about four convictions for every hundred working fortune tellers. Victims shrink from signing formal complaints or appearing in court; the publicity is dreaded.

"The best way, therefore, to save the public from itself is to expose the methods used. Therefore, the most carefully guarded secrets of fortune tellers and mediums are being revealed by the Parent Assembly of the Society of American Magicians, the arch foe of fortune tellers.

"The means of learning Alice's name, address, and the questions is the most common trick used by mediums and fortune tellers. It is known as the 'office switch.'

"While Alice wrote her name and question, the Rajah had concealed in his right hand a duplicate piece of paper already folded to the size to which he told Alice to fold hers.

"When she placed her folded question in the center of the table he picked it up in his right hand. He raised his left hand, concealing the blank paper, to his forehead at the same time, and it was an easy thing for him to switch the papers.

"Look at the accompanying illustration. He shifts the folded blank paper in his left hand to his right and Alice's message to his left hand, concealing the substitution. While he lets a corner of the blank paper show from behind the right hand, still held to his forehead, he drops his left hand to his lap, deftly opens Alice's message and

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reads it. He takes a pencil and makes some marks on the table, meanwhile, to give him an excuse for looking down.

"The third move is to refold the question after he has

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read it, reverse his palming hiding process, replace the original paper in his right hand, and drop the left hand, with the blank message, in his pocket in a natural manner. Many mediums get rid of the blank, or duplicate piece of paper, by drawing out a handkerchief.

"The slate writing part is most convincing and uncanny, even to a magician, or one versed in medium's wiles, unless he is familiar with chemistry and physics. Alice actually did seal the two slates together, after the piece of chalk was placed between them. The slates are 'real,' meaning untampered with—some mediums permit the dupe to bring his or her own slates. But the secret lies in the chalk itself.

"Seemingly nothing but an ordinary piece of chalk which one may buy in any store, it is actually the entire secret of the trick! It is pulverized chalk mixed with a little water, glue, and iron filings, molded and allowed to become hard.

"The medium, after the slates have been sealed with the chalk between them, places them under the table. While they are out of sight he brings out unseen a small but powerful magnet and traces with it the words he wants to appear. As he writes the magnet pulls the chalk along noiselessly! The greatest skill is needed to do this stunt, as the writing must be done backward.

"The iron filings in the chalk naturally follow the magnet, and while the writing is always somewhat shaky, it is always readable. Naturally, no one expects a spirit to write Spencerian or Palmer methods.

V

LET US take the case of Virginia Roster, who lives in a city in the State for which she was named.

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Virginia worked in the First National Bank. She was a check sorter. Virginia was twenty-four this summer. Pretty, gullible, happy, and a girl on whom the rest of the world smiled. She lived with her mother, a widow, on the outskirts of town in the house in which she had been born. She drove to the bank each day in a second hand flivver.

Part of the perpetual happiness of Virginia, Ginny to her friends, was her friendship with young Arthur Lee, who was twenty-seven and wanted to marry her.

They were at a party one night when one of their friends, Pauline Jones, met them breathlessly with this announcement:

"There is a fortune teller in town, down at the Spiritualist Hall, who is wonderful. He told me I was going to marry this year, that I didn't know the man very well yet, but that it was certain I would get better acquainted with him this month and before six months were passed I'd be Mrs. So-and-So!"

"Ginny," Arthur cried, "let's go to see what he says about us."

So Ginny and Arthur and the rest of the party went down to the Spiritualist Hall. There was a banner outside reading: "Rajah Ahmet, Prophet."

The prophet was garbed in the traditional turban of many colors and stood on a small raised platform. A large crystal ball was in a small stand. The Rajah was rubbing his hands together. He reminded one of a cat licking its chops.

"My friends," he opened sonorously, "you are gathered to see a miracle, the reading by the spirits of unseen messages sealed in light-proof envelopes. Not alone will these messages be read by the spirits, but the proper

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answer will be given to each of them by the same spirits. And this message will in turn be given by me to you, for I will see the truth in the crystal, and then pass it on."

The Rajah distributed envelopes, paper and pencils to the audience.

Then he spoke again.

"My friends, as you write your question, keep your mind concentrated on it. As you finish writing, raise your hand, I will then collect the questions.

The Rajah held the tray high so that every one could see that he did not touch, substitute, or change the envelopes. He placed the tray and questions on the table on the little platform. He put the crystal ball and stand on one side of the tray. "To insure the spirits being close to the questions," he said.

Quickly, one right after another, the Rajah answered each question. He seemed not to touch the envelopes at all, except to move them aside when he had answered the question contained in them.

When he came to Ginny's question, he said: "The initials 'V. R.' come through very strong. This person, a girl, has a very nice answer coming to her, but it's a little too personal for reply in public. Wait after the seance is over, and I will give you a private reading."

Ginny's question had been:

"If I marry Arthur will I have to leave my position in the bank?"

Setting the crystal ball aside, the Rajah picked up the tray and came down in the audience with it.

"Pick up your own envelopes, friends," he said. "Note they are unopened and not tampered with at all!" It was a miracle!

Ginny met the Rajah after the others had left, Arthur

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agreed to wait downstairs for her. Ginny fell under the Rajah's spell. She told him much more than he told her. The Rajah in the end, predicted Arthur and she would be married. She was very happy.

Two days went by.

Rajah Ahmet came to the bank where Ginny worked with a check on a New York bank signed by a well known broker. It was for four thousand dollars. The paying teller refused to give the cash for it, so the receiving teller took it for collection.

That night, at home, Ginny received a telephone call from the Rajah. He had phoned to state that the spirits had just come to him to say that Ginny's and Arthur's first child would be a son. Ginny flushed, even though the fortune teller was a long way away. In the midst of her embarrassment, the Rajah explained about the check.

"Would Ginny, in her capacity of check sorter, tell the paying teller to release the four thousand dollars?"

"Surely."

First thing in the morning, the Rajah appeared at the paying teller's window. Was the check O. K.? Could he have the cash? Ginny O.K.'d the transaction. The Rajah got his cash and off he went.

Shortly after the noon hour came a telegram.

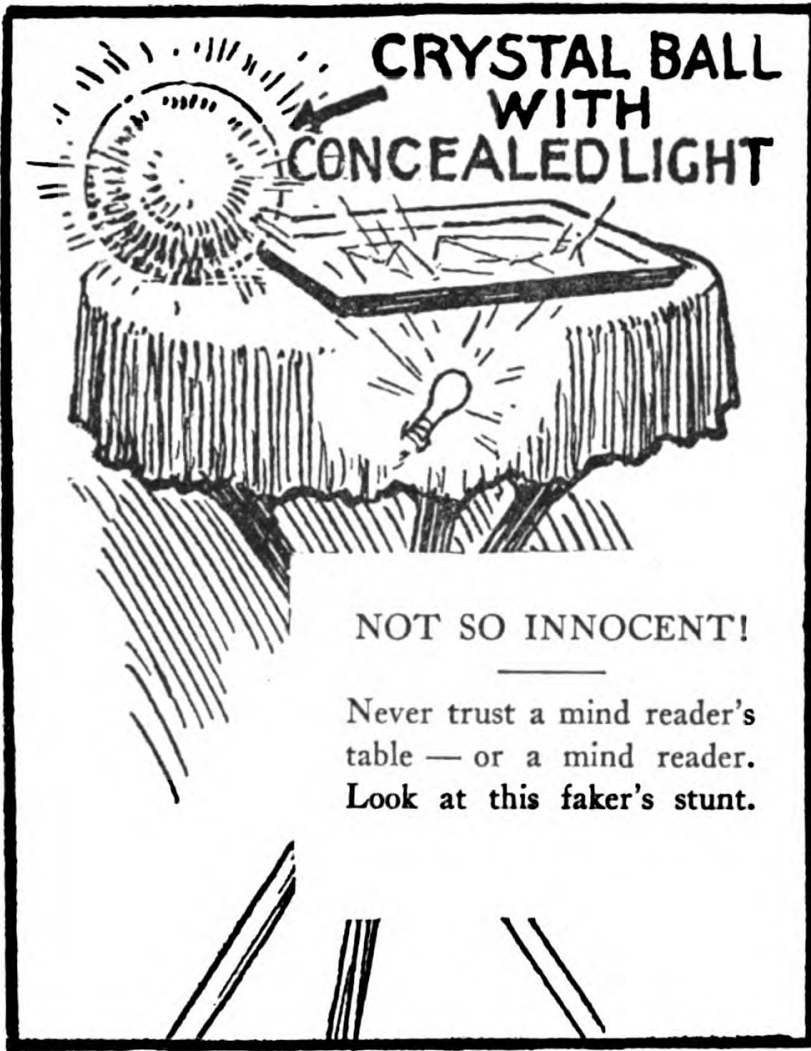
Hold Rajah Ahmet for forgery.

POLICE COMMISSIONER, New York.

Disaster—lawyers—detectives—a weeping Ginny—a terrified girl!

Let's pass on. You can draw your own conclusions as to the disgrace and unhappiness another fortune teller had caused.

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The tray on which the questions are collected is transparent. The 50-watt light in the false table top penetrates the tray and envelope. A small concealed light in the crystal ball hides the illumination from the table lamp.

How did he read the questions without opening the envelopes or touching them in any way?

Concealed beneath the table, where no one could see it, was a fifty-watt electric light bulb. The tray was of parchment, and when the questions were laid flat on this transparent paper tray, the light from the concealed

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bulb penetrated both tray and envelope, permitting the fortune teller to read the question without any difficulty.

There was a small light in the crystal ball that was always burning. This light, always above and in front of the tray, prevented the rays of the concealed light from being seen.

Lights in table tops are the foundation of many fortune tellers' "miracle making reputations." The more innocent a table appears, if it is used in reading sealed messages, beware!

VI

FAKE MEDIUMS make use of the death columns as leads. Here is a letter which has just come into my hands, which proves this fact beyond doubt.

ALLAH AHASSAD

Oriental Seer and Spirit Medium

Dear Mr. Kane:

After four months I am at last happy to tell you that I can arrange a meeting with the Master and you. Conditions are now favorable for you and your family to get in touch with those in the spirit world. Phone me for an appointment. The Master will tell you exactly what you want to know about your health (you recall you were worried about this), business affairs, etc.

The Master's fees are only ten dollars for a consultation, but even if they were ten times ten dollars, what you would learn would be well worth it. He may be able to materialize a spirit, or, if not, he can bring you a message from some relative in the spirit world.

Phone as soon as you can for an appointment, as the favorable conditions may not last.

Very truly yours,

GRACE HARDY,

Secretary.

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Inasmuch as this letter was delivered two days after Mr. Kane's death, you can readily see the effect it had on Mrs. Kane. Her instant desire was to see the "Master" seer at once. Read the letter carefully. Note that he may "materialize a spirit." It might even be Mr. Kane, she reasoned. See how, in the letter, it is stated conditions are favorable. That is urging quick action. The whole letter, if analyzed, shows an amazing understanding of human nature.

Fortunately, Mrs. Kane showed the letter to a family friend who understood the "racket." He turned it over to the police, who sent a policewoman dressed in black to pose as Mrs. Kane. This policewoman obtained enough evidence to convict the arch faker—but the courts only gave him a short sentence (six months) on a charge of fortune telling; there is not a sufficiently powerful statute in the State in which Mrs. Kane lives to send fake mediums up for the length of time they deserve.

VII

TONY MALANO, a Sicilian by birth, was a prosperous fruit dealer in New York's Upper West Side. He was an honest, hardworking and God fearing man bringing up his six "bambinos" as good American children. One day, one of his customers, living on West 109th Street, known to him as Mrs. Stern, seemed particularly happy.

Unlike her usual self, Mrs. Stern chatted with Tony. There were no other customers and Tony welcomed the opportunity to talk with a "fine American lady" about something other than, "Yes, the bananas are fine, today." Mrs. Stern related a story about her husband

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having made a lot of money on some stock "the ghosts told him to buy."

Superstitious Tony eagerly asked for more details, but Mrs. Stern said she didn't know them, but if Tony was really interested, she'd ask her husband for the whole story. Tony practically begged her, and as she left, he presented her with a huge pineapple he said he'd been "savin'" for the wife and bambinos.

Two days passed before Mrs. Stern returned. Two anxious days for Tony because he had heard so much of the great wealth in the stock market that he yearned for a chance to make money faster than in selling fruits, despite the fact in seventeen years he had scrimped and saved until he had almost \$30,000 in the Chemical National Bank. Nervously finishing waiting on a customer, he went to her.

"Did you find out about the ghosts?" he asked. "Will they tell me about how to make money?"

Mrs. Stern gave him a card and said that her husband had told her it would admit him to the presence of a great fortune teller, whose aim was to aid others, not himself, and that all he charged was "what the visitor could afford." Mrs. Stern explained that her husband had made more money that day and that Tony would be wise to go at once to consult with the fortune teller. The card read:

ORIENTAL SEER TELLS THE FUTURE

Call at 950 East 101st St.

**LEARN WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT
LOVE AFFAIRS MONEY MATTERS YOUR FUTURE**

Up One Flight — Ask for

MARVELO

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It is said foreign born men are most susceptible to belief in fortune tellers and Tony proved it, as he lost no time after closing his store, to go home to dress in his best clothing. He then took the subway to East 96th Street from where he went to the address on East 101st Street.

Walking up one flight, of a shabby apartment which was almost tenement in appearance, Tony asked for "Marvelo," presenting the card Mrs. Stern gave him. He was ushered into a room covered with astronomical designs and signs of the Zodiac. He was hardly seated when Marvelo appeared.

We must here consider Marvelo's appearance. Swarthy, neither Negroid nor gypsy in appearance, dressed in raiment of most gorgeous hues, out of keeping with the appearance of the flat, he was most impressive to this untutored Italian. In heavy, accented tones, he commanded, with one hand upraised:

"Speak not, for I will tell you what you want to know. Marvel not that I, who know all things, know your name is Antonio Malano, that you were born in Palermo, that you are in the fruit business, that you prosper now, but would gain more wealth.

"My fee is what you can afford. Cross my palm with money and I will unravel the tangled skeins of your future. See, I who never saw you before, spoke of your past and called you by name."

Most amazed by this startling introduction, Tony took a heavy chamois purse from his pocket and extracted a greasy bill, hardly noting its denomination. Marvelo then continued:

"With these cards (here he produced most mysteriously a full pack of ordinary playing cards from hands

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Tony later swore were empty) I will lay out your future."

Proceeding to lay the cards out in a most mysterious manner, he continued:

"Look, the Ace of Clubs turns up. Then the Ace of Spades. These are the death cards of your wife and yourself. Together you will die, as you have lived. Here is the Queen of Hearts, the love card. Note, it balances over you both. This Six of Hearts that follows shows you have six children. Look, the Ace of Hearts follows—that means another child will be with your wife within a year.

"This Ten of Diamonds shows your present wealth. If the Ace of Diamonds follows: more and more money will be yours. Look! Sure enough, here it is! Money and lots of it will be yours if you follow the directions of these cards and me."

Going through the entire deck, telling Tony facts of his past life as card after card turned up, Marvelo held Tony intense and spellbound. Finally, as the deck was exhausted, he extended his hand and asked for Tony's right hand to be placed upward on the table so the palm was exposed.

Taking a mysterious looking pointer, he read that Tony had "crossed the ocean, expected to make another trip, that he was hardworking, that he was even tempered, although prone to anger if excited," together with the startling information that "there is a presence here tonight, an unseen presence that prevents me going on. Return at this hour tomorrow, and I will tell you how to make money, much money."

At his store the next day, Tony was so nervous and excited that he could do little work. Mrs. Stern did not

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appear, so Tony had no one in whom to confide. Night came and found Tony at Marvelo's apartment at the appointed time.

The charts on the walls were covered with heavy black materials and Marvelo was also dressed in a black effect with a cowl, something like the monks of old wore. Tony was told to sit on one side of the room, on one of two chairs placed against the far wall. Marvelo sat next to him.

"Here," said Marvelo, handing Tony a long rope, "I want you to tie me to this chair. Then, tie my hands. Now, make sure that I can not escape or move. You are satisfied? Good. Move your chair two feet from me, and directly in front of me. Place it thus. That's right.

"Mr. Malano, I intend to ask the spirits to talk to me tonight, tell me how you make money, and lots of it. But first the fee, is Five Dollars. Lay it at my feet. On it, place that bell which later spirits will ring. That's right, that bell over there by the light switch. As soon as you place the bell on the bill, take that long pole and press the button that turns out the lights."

Tony did as he was told, but, as he told his wife later that night, he was so frightened he hardly knew what he was doing. Pushing off the lights, he sat squarely facing Marvelo, whose face could hardly be seen in the dim light coming in from the street.

After a few moments of silence he heard Marvelo invoking the aid of his "spirit control." Then, while the "conversation" continued he heard the bell he had placed at Marvelo's feet, beginning to ring. At first gently, then louder and louder. He could hardly remain on his chair. As the bell reached its loudest pitch, a ghostly form arose from behind Marvelo's chair, groaning and wailing with

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the weirdest kind of of vibration, which shook the room. Tony was too paralyzed to move. The blood froze in his veins. Stark, cold fear made the hair raise on his head. The ghostly form swayed to and fro, and as suddenly as it appeared, it vanished. Again, Marvelo's voice broke his thoughts:

"I thank you, great spirit who has aided me. I will reveal to this earthbound that which you tell. Again ring the bell for me, and as you finish, toss it in the air, light the lights which the mortal put out to welcome your coming, and vanish."

Marvelo had hardly stopped speaking when the bell began to ring again, as though swinging faster and faster in the air. It stopped ringing suddenly, and Tony felt, rather than heard it tossed in the air. As it landed on the other side of the room, and hadn't even begun to stop rolling, the lights flashed on, revealing Marvelo still bound to the chair, exactly as Tony had left him.

This "evidence" of the "spook's" visit assured Tony of Marvelo's familiarity with the spirits, as well as leaving him unstrung. Marvelo bade Tony unfasten the knots and "free his earthly body," explaining as Tony did, that "ropes could hold his flesh but not his spirit which wandered about communing with those in the other world."

Marvelo told Tony that the spirits had told him that there was a fortune to be made quickly in a copper stock and that the spirit had given the name of the broker from whom it could be bought. Tony begged for the name and address which Marvelo hesitantly gave him.

The following day found Tony at the Chemical National Bank attempting to withdraw \$15,000 in bills. Due to the bank policy of wanting to know why a client

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in Tony's position would want to draw half his capital, the paying teller turned him over to an officer of the bank to whom Tony related his story.

The bank official communicated with the district attorney's office, who sent an officer with Tony to the broker. Sensing trouble, the broker stated that he had never heard of the stock to which Tony referred. Leaving the brokers, the officer and Tony went to the East 104th Street Police Station for a detective. From there, they went to Marvelo's apartment.

Marvelo was surprised as he was about to leave the apartment and arrested as a fortune teller. He was fined \$100.00 and given six months on the "Island" on that charge, despite his protest in Magistrate Joanah's court that he had never heard of the stock, nor had he ever seen Tony before. An attempt was made to arrest Mrs. Stern either as an accomplice or a material witness, but she was not to be found.

The State's Attorney General, under the Martin Act in New York, can investigate brokers, and immediately went after the broker to whom Marvelo had sent Tony, when the case was reported to him. No evidence was unearthed which permitted his conviction in connection with Marvelo, but enough facts were found to arrest him on a charge of selling spurious stocks. This case is now pending.

* * * *

The method used to "hook" Tony was simple. To start with, Mrs. Stern was an accomplice of Marvelo. When the police tried to trace her, they found that she had told the same story that she had told to Tony to many small storekeepers in the neighborhood. All denied having "fallen" for her talk, but I have my doubts.

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Those whom fortune tellers "trim" never confess. If they did, police would have an easier time making arrests and getting convictions.

The card Mrs. Stern gave Tony was marked in some way that Tony didn't see. Prior to his visit to Marvelo's, she had gotten all the information possible about him, his wife and children and given it to the fortune teller. Thus, when the victim arrived, Marvelo knew from the mark on the card who he was.

He arranged the cards in much the same way as a card sharper "stacks" a "cold deck." The shuffle and false cut of gamblers are a common knowledge and it was easy for Marvelo to bring the aces and other cards out exactly as he wanted them. The story he told as the lesser important cards came out was one that he made up as he went along.

When Marvelo read Tony's palm, he told him nothing Tony didn't know, and even if he hadn't had previous information, he still could have said the things he did. Fortune tellers use applied psychology without even knowing it.

Note that Marvelo told Tony he'd "crossed the ocean." Of course he had, else how could he have come from Italy? "Expected to take another trip." Where is the "soul so dead" who doesn't want to see his native land again? His hands showed he was hardworking. They were bound to be calloused from opening crates of fruit or cutting bananas. "Even tempered?" Certainly, a retail man must be even tempered or he'd lose his trade. "Prone to anger if excited." Not alone is this a national trait of the Italian, but most of us lose our tempers when very excited.

Almost all fortune tellers and palm readers work this

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way. Take a few self-evident facts, weave a story about them, make the listener believe it is uncanny or supernatural and we have a possible start to a tragedy. Palmists are good judges of human natures, find out a few facts from a victim along deduction lines, and then begin to ask a few disguised questions, the "answers" to which, a little later, can be used.

When the time came for Marvelo to "produce the ghost," he simply stole a simple trick or two from mediums. The rope that Tony tied was an ordinary clothes line, but had been selected because it slid easily. After Tony put out the lights, Marvelo released one hand and picked up the bell. In the darkness, of course, Tony could not see that.

The appearance of the "ghost" was equally simple. Lying on the floor behind the black curtains covering the wall, was a piece of white gauze chemically treated with luminous paint. Marvelo had a pulley arrangement whereby with his one free hand he could pick up the thread controlling it. Pulling on the thread raised the gauze up. Against the white gauze, the black curtain made a great contrast. When Marvelo dropped the thread, the gauze naturally fell to the floor. Marvelo then pulled the black curtain over the small bunch of material on the floor and the ghost had vanished.

He then picked up the bell again, swung it a few times, as a signal to a concealed assistant (it might have been Mrs. Stern) that the seance was over, put his hand back in the loop from which he released it, and the helper put on the lights from another switch in an adjoining room.

There is nothing supernatural or mysterious in the methods used by fake mediums or fortune tellers. In the book, "The Other Side of the Footlights," printed in

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1922, at the suggestion of members of the Society of American Magicians, when a war on crooked mediums was under way, complete data was given on how they could detect fraudulent mediums in the presence of alleged communications from the dead. This book, together with "The Life of the Mysterious Dr. Q" are known as text books among magicians, but neither book may be obtained through regular book store channels.

Words used by mediums are always awe inspiring. Note that Marvelo talks of "earthbound" when referring to Tony. That expression is a mysterious term used by genuine spiritualists in referring to those still living. These believers in the new religion do not claim, as do fake mediums, that spirits can be materialized at a moment's notice, nor do they, as a general thing, act as fortune tellers.

VIII

ANN TARBELL was a pretty widow of twenty-six. She had some money—about six thousand dollars, and was undecided whether she should continue work as a clerk in a Wall Street specialty shop, or marry Charlie Burns, who said he was a cashier of a fairly large printing corporation. While walking in the Bowling Green section of New York on her way to work one morning, she was attracted by an odd sign—neat, dignified, which read: "The Swami knows all. Consultation invited."

On an impulse she went in.

A long, poorly lighted hall led to an equally dimly lit anteroom. Ann nervously wondered what had possessed her to come, but it was too late to back out, for a well-dressed and dapper young man was greeting her with a cheery "Good morning."

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Ann explained that she'd like a consultation. Without asking her name, or any questions, he requested Ann to give him a glove, a handkerchief, or other piece of wearing apparel, as "the Swami gets the answers from the touch of your personality contained in something personal."

She gave him a handkerchief and he left the room. Returning a few moments later, he stated that the Swami would see her. He paused to warn her that "the Swami is controlled by the Unknown and Unseen," and must be permitted to talk without interruption after the consultation has started.

He led her into a chamber fitted up as an Oriental temple, or at least what Ann thought an Oriental temple would be.

A huge bronze brazier in one corner of the room, joss sticks burning at the feet of the prodigious Buddha, an oilcloth roll on which were painted the signs of the Zodiac, a great chart of a nude form, and a picture of a ghost made up the decorations.

In the center of the room was the table without which no seer or fortune teller operates. There were but two chairs in the room, and the assistant waved Ann into one while the Swami took the other.

"Let me have your hand," he said, as he sat down.

Ann felt repelled at the touch of his fingers, for his hand was dirty, flabby, moist, almost deathlike in its limpness. She was glad when he dropped her fingers after giving them a tight squeeze.

"He that knows all will now speak," the assistant intoned. "You say nothing." He left the room.

Alone with this soothsayer with dirty hands, shabby, kimono-like gown and weird manner, Ann doubly re-

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gretted coming to see him, but as he began to talk the fear dropped from her, for his deep monotone was soothing, almost hypnotizing.

"My child," he commenced, "you come to me in doubt about something. You are uncertain about a love affair. You are wondering if you should marry. I receive from this handkerchief of your certain impulses that tell me to advise you to wed.

"You were married. You are a widow. You should marry again, and soon.

"I see the shoulders of a man who is neither large nor small, neither stout nor thin. He is not over thirty. You have met him only recently, yet he sways your emotions. Take him for your husband. Your own late husband, from the Other World, tells me to bid you do this.

"Bring the boy to me if you still doubt. But that is up to you. You, at least, should return for more advice. The fee is five dollars for this reading. Longer readings are ten dollars. No more now, come again."

As Ann hesitated, stunned by this apparent power of the seer, the assistant came in the room as though called, although Ann did not see the Swami make a move. He ushered Ann from the Swami's presence, and before she knew it, had collected the five-dollar fee and had escorted her to the outer door.

Ann could hardly wait to reach a pay station to phone Charlie. She was so unnerved that she tried three times before she got the right number. Ann almost shouted into the phone:

"Charlie! I've been to a great fortune teller. He says I should marry you and I never said a word about you. He's wonderful. Get some time off this lunch hour. I

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will too, and we can meet. I want you to go to him with me."

Ann didn't give Charlie time to think. An engagement was made to meet in front of the Swami's office. Came noon. As Ann saw him come swinging down the street, she ran to greet him. Her eyes gleamed as she told him of her experiences.

Charlie wanted to have lunch before they went to the Swami, but Ann emphatically stated she "just couldn't eat" now. So they went at once to the seer's parlors.

Ann told the assistant that they wanted a ten-dollar reading each. Would the Swami receive them together, telling their fortunes together? This couldn't be done, the assistant replied. "The control only takes each mind and body separately."

They arranged for Charlie to enter the Swami's salon first.

When he came out, obviously amazed, Ann threw her arms about him and kissed him.

"Did he say you should marry?" she excitedly asked.

"He sure did, honey," Charlie replied. "And better than that he described you to a 'T.' He must be guided by spirits or something. Now, you go in and see what happens."

Ann was ushered back into the office. Dirty and queer looking as the Swami was, Ann could have kissed him, she was so happy. Her consultation was a repetition of his earlier advice, but more elaborate. The Swami even predicted that her first child would be a boy.

So Ann and Charlie were married the following week.

* * * *

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Immediately following the wedding, they went to Atlantic City for a week's honeymoon. All seemed wonderful until the third day, when Charlie's money ran out. "Hadr't had time to go to the bank," he said.

Ann gave him a three-hundred-dollar draft on her savings bank, and her bank book so the Atlantic City bank could arrange the transfer of the funds. And they had a glorious time.

Back in New York they picked out an ideal little apartment and furnished it on the installment plan. Things seemed to be moving along nicely. Ann blessed the Swami daily.

One evening after they had been married less than a month, Charlie told Ann he didn't believe in a wife having money in her own name. He pointed out that it should be in their joint names, "so if either died, the other could draw."

Ann agreed and gave Charlie her bank book to open the joint account.

Once or twice afterwards she mentioned money matters to Charlie, but he kissed her and told her "not to worry her pretty head about money." Ann worried a little about this, as the collectors from the installment furniture house were calling to tell her that the last two installments were due, but when she mentioned the visits to Charlie, he flew in a rage and left the house.

He never returned!

Ann went to the firm where he was employed as a "cashier" and found that Charlie had been a shipping department clerk. She went to the bank to see about the "joint account," and found Charlie had never opened one, and that he'd withdrawn all her balance in cash. She went to the office of the Swami with her story, saying

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she'd never have married unless he'd advised her. The Swami had even forgotten he'd ever talked to her. He wasn't interested in her.

A child was to be born. Absolutely penniless, heart-broken, and unable to work now, she tried suicide by leaping from Spuyten Duyvil Bridge. The attempt failed. While recovering, Ann told her story to an attorney, who brought the story to the attention of the Press Bureau of the Parent Assembly of the Society of American Magicians, which investigated the Swami's method of fortune telling, and gave the result to the proper authorities. The Swami was arrested and fined. He left town, but probably is back in his nefarious trade in some other city under some other name.

* * * *

How did the Swami know that Ann was a widow, that she was in love, and that she had come to him for aid in solving her problems? She had spoken not a word in his presence, or in front of his attendant; she had given no hint of her past.

Why, all the Swami had to do was rely on his wits when Ann appeared, and he says almost all fortune tellers' wits are exceedingly sharp.

When Ann came in her costume consisted of a dark dress, a hat of last year's style, and new shoes. She wore a string of beads and a wedding ring, no other jewelry. From this, the soothsayer told her "fortune."

The wedding ring showed that she had been married. It was a better kind than the dress or hat she wore. The dress looked as though it was the type worn for "second mourning." He deduced she was probably a widow in reduced circumstances.

Her shoes were of a brand widely advertised to help

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foot troubles; hence she was working at a position that kept her on her feet, obviously something she never had to do when her husband was alive. The beads looked like a gift, they were so new. Naturally he figured a gift of that type had come from a man.

She would not have come to him if she had not been in doubt about something. What else could it be that worried her than the question, "Should I remarry?" Figuring and partially correct in his surmise, that the widow did want to remarry, he told her to. Why not tell her what she wanted to hear, he reasoned.

He had no interest in whether she did remarry or not, all he wanted was to tell her something that would convince her he was a marvel. It is in these ways of making deductions and giving advice that the fortune teller, intent on nothing but making money, is a menace to society.

Even men carry marks of identification that give the seer a chance to make deductions and make statements that puzzle the smartest people.

They do not need to wear fraternal order insignia to furnish the fortune teller with clues. Their rings, watch chains, cut of their hair, clothes, shoes, even speech or mannerisms are sufficient to tell him a number of obvious things, which, when translated into his flowery and strange words, make it all seem very impressive. And on these reputations are built his fortune, for as his fame spreads so do his fees go up.

CHAPTER III

BURNED MESSAGE READING

(This chapter was written by Ernest Davids, a member of the Press Bureau of the Parent Assembly of the Society of American Magicians. It details a new method used by fake spirit mediums to delude and defraud the credulous. I hesitated to include it in this book for fear some fraud, who had not yet learned of it, might adopt it to his own nefarious ends . . . The Author.)

* * * *

THERE are always new methods and new wrinkles presented during fraudulent "psychic manifestations." These strain one's brain power to its utmost to arrive at a conclusion which reveals just what material and physical actions take place to accomplish the result presented. And the simpler the method, the harder its detection.

Here is a case which, fortunately I have just cleared up for a banker who came to me with a weird story of how a client was in danger of being defrauded.

The problem I had to solve was this:

A sitter is requested to write a question on a small piece of paper. The medium isn't anywhere near. The sitter is asked to roll the paper into a small pellet, drop it into an envelope and seal the envelope. Mind you, the medium remains at the distance all the time.

Only after the envelope is securely sealed, does the medium walk over. Then he picks up a pair of fire-tongs such as you find in front of almost any fireplace and

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the sitter (NOT the medium) is asked to place the envelope into the prongs of the tongs which are then immediately held into the fire by the medium. The envelope, always in full sight, is thoroughly consumed by the flames.

Yet, after a few moments, the medium is able to "answer" the question written previously.

If you will analyze the effect of seeing a question burned, thinking back over all the methods one knows of getting messages which are apparently burnt, you will never recall anything like this. As \$10,000 insurance money and a \$50,000 pearl necklace were involved I spent much time on the case.

Enough introduction. A Mrs. Edith Burrows, a recent widow, returning from Europe recently, met a woman calling herself Mrs. Alice Taylor, on the deck of a great oceanic liner. They became great friends by the second day out, for Mrs. Taylor regaled Mrs. Burrows with stories of how a famous spirit medium in New York brought direct messages from her late husband.

Mrs. Burrows, determined to see if she could get a message through from her own husband, begged for the address of the medium which Mrs. Taylor reluctantly gave.

A day or so after the boat docked Mrs. Burrows visited the mediums who were known as "The Chesters." Here is what happened in Mrs. Burrows' own words:

"A young girl dressed in a bright colored Turkish costume ushered me into a small room lighted only by two candles. I gave my full name and at her request laid upon the table one dollar for every letter of my name. No further word was spoken. The money remained untouched by the girl.

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"She signalled me to follow her into a larger inner room. I was then asked to be seated. The girl then silently disappeared. I looked around this strange room. The windows and walls were almost entirely covered with thick drapery material. The floors were heavily carpeted.

"Across one corner of the room a rod had been placed from which was suspended more thick draperies of a heavy velour. On the other side was a small fireplace in which was burning a real wood fire. The lights were of a ghostly greenish hue, filling the room with a ghostly radiance.

"I was frightened by this silent black draped room and wondered if I was going to ever communicate with my husband. On the table in front of me was a large crystal, a trumpet, a small pad and pencil. Rows of chairs occupied the rest of the room which I found later reserved for public readings.

"After a moment of waiting, I felt or sensed a presence in the room, when from behind the heavy draperies appeared a woman dressed in a long pure white garment with her face partly veiled, similar to that of a Turkish woman. She came forward noiselessly.

" 'Mrs. Burrows?' she asked almost in a whisper, to which I replied with a nervous

" 'Yes'.

" 'You must believe and keep silence with me while I try to learn of you and what is in your heart.' As I sat spellbound, the greenish lights seemed to grow more dim until the room was almost entirely dark. She bowed her head in silent concentration for what seemed an endless moment.

" 'Edith Burrows, there is a man named Harry in

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spirit. He loves you. You have been separated from him for only a short time and are deeply grieved. I see water; you have just returned from an ocean trip and are trying to forget.'

"I started—how did she know these things, that were so true? I wanted to speak but dared not, since she had asked for silence. She went on.

"'Fate has sent you to us so that we may help you communicate with your beloved one and help get his messages through to you. The future has much in store for you. We have the power and desire to help you in many ways. Do you believe? You may now speak.'

"'Yes, oh yes, I believe. When can I speak with my husband and what must I do? I will give anything, only help me to hear his voice.' She answered me in a changed voice, as she seemed to awaken her conscious mind.

"'My dear, this is enough for one day; we must not tire you.

"'Come again to me when you are rested, and the spirits prevail more clearly. Then we will answer any questions that may trouble you and will try to advise you further. Rest assured you will be successful in any earthly undertaking if you will allow yourself to be guided by the spirit of your departed husband. Thank you!'

"And she disappeared.

"As I rose, the girl from the outer room entered and showed me the way out.

"'Madame wishes another appointment?' she asked. 'We have Monday and Friday evenings open for public meetings, and any afternoon or evening, except Wednesday, for private interviews.'

"I agreed to come the following Tuesday.

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"Once home, I immediately phoned Mrs. Taylor, who agreed to go with me when I kept the appointment, so on Tuesday night, at the appointed time, we went together.

"As we entered, Mrs. Taylor placed \$10.00 on the table and I did the same, not knowing just what the fee might be for second readings. The girl took our names as though we were strangers and made us wait for a moment before taking us into the inner rooms.

"This time there were about six other people in the room, already seated. A victrola was playing softly. This group was evidently complete, for as soon as we were seated, the Master Chester entered in a long white robe and flowing turban. Madame Chester did not appear with him. As the victrola continued to play soft music, the medium announced that he was very happy to see us. Also that an examination could be made of the spirit cabinet by all present, before the seance would begin.

"I followed Mrs. Taylor as she led the way. She explained to me that the cabinet was empty and would be occupied by the spirits later on.

"We returned to our seats. Each of us then received a slip of paper on which we were asked to write a question, and to fold the slip as many times as possible. Next, we were told to place the tiny folded slip in an envelope. The envelope was sealed by us.

"The lights seemed to flicker out and there was no light except that of the fireplace.

"Chester rose from his chair hardly visible in the dim light and gave some psychic readings, thrilling people in the audience by his translation of their secret hopes and dreams.

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"My name was not called and I was bitterly disappointed.

"After the readings were over, one by one our sealed questions were taken up by Chester, in a queer looking pair of fireplace tongs. These were burned before our eyes in the fireplace!

"Next, we were each handed a small trumpet, and were told the seance would continue. Mrs. Taylor whispered to me to watch the cabinet.*

"I focused my eyes upon the cabinet. What was coming? What was I to see? I had been promised much. Suddenly a voice came from the cabinet. I placed the trumpet to my ear. The voice grew louder. My heart was racing. The voice was like that of a drunken person, as it became more clear. Finally it almost shrieked:

" 'Edith, where are you?'

"Was this for me or was there another Edith in the room? It was so dark and I was so frightened!

" 'Edith, my dear, the question; I have been waiting so long to talk to you. Though I seem far away my spirit is always with you. Please come again and again. You are among friends; do as they say.'

" 'Give up your pearls. They are too mundane. Place the insurance money in the hands of those who will do most for you. My spirit is with you always.'

"Then the voice seemed to fall into nothingness. I felt like crying aloud: 'Let me see you.' But the words seemed to choke in my throat as I dropped the trumpet.

"My mind was in a consuming turmoil. Was this really the spirit of my husband?

"Difficult as it was, I sat quietly through the remainder

* A "spirit cabinet" is one that is made of four black curtains suspended on poles. It is always exhibited to the "sitters" to prove it is "empty."

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of the seance, while others present received messages from their loved ones and answers to their questions which has been burned to ashes before our very eyes.

"I knew now that spirits did exist though I had seen none.

"Suddenly a movement of the curtains near the spirit cabinet. Something white and luminous appeared. Then a ghostlike form stood revealed before us out of nowhere. It seemed to be the figure of a woman clad in masses of white gauze. It stayed only a moment.

"Before I had time to realize that I had seen this spirit from the dark shadows of Eternity, it had glided back beyond the curtains, and was gone.

"Next, a silver star seemed to float over our heads, and disappeared. My nerves were tense as I gripped the back of the chair in front of me.

"The lights were turned on. The seance was over.

"Chester seemed slightly dazed, but quite anxious to know the effects and results of the seance.

"My eyes were cast downward as they became accustomed to the light. In my lap was a carefully folded sheet of paper. What was this and where had it come from? I opened it. A note! The handwriting was scrawly—the signature Harry's! I turned to Mrs. Taylor dumbfounded.

" 'Did you receive a message through the hand of the medium?' she asked quietly.

"Lacking the power of speech I nodded and handed the message to her as she read slowly:

" 'Buy E. C. E. Company stock with your \$10,000 insurance money. Bring your pearls to Chester also. He'll tell you what to do with them. I will come to you again.

'Harry.'

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"Surely, this was the will of Heaven itself, my racing brain thought. This then was the right thing to do, to have come here. Tomorrow I would get the money and bring it to these mediums for safe investment and dividends.

"The group disbanded and as they went out I approached the medium timidly. I said I'd bring my pearls as well as the \$10,000 to him, so he could buy E. C. E. stock for me. He seemed to be astonished. He said he knew nothing of such a stock.

"I then showed him the note which he said he'd never seen before. He explained he'd go into a private trance to see what Harry had in mind. He further stated he had Mrs. Taylor's husband in spirit land as a 'control' and that he had done much good for her.

"Mrs. Taylor confirmed his statements and I was certainly thrilled with the prospect of making money through Harry's advice.

"Alice and I then left. I went to the Wickstrom Bank and Trust Company the next day to withdraw the \$10,000 in cash with which I was to purchase this stock that had been recommended by my departed husband.

"With my mind so filled with the workings of the spirit medium, it did not occur to me that Harry would never wish me to place all my principal in one company. And if it had, Mrs. Taylor had advised me that spirits were always correct in their guidance, so I'd have pushed my caution in the background anyway. No more worry as to finance, my brain was singing.

"I then went to get my necklace from the safe deposit vault, but when I was opening the steel door, a bank official came to me and I told him my story."

* * * *

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Mrs. Burrows came to me in company with Mr. Cramer, President of the Wickstrom Bank and Trust Company. I know Mr. Cramer well and he is acquainted with my interest in spiritual matters where fraud is involved. He made sure that Mrs. Burrows would visit me by bringing her himself.

To make a long story short, I persuaded Mrs. Burrows to give up any idea of investing in the E. C. E. Company, at least until I had investigated the case. Believe me, when I say persuaded, I mean it. It certainly did take persuasion on my part and her attitude was nothing short of belligerent. Poor woman.

Through her, I made an appointment with the mediums, Mr. and Mrs. Chester, but it was not until my third sitting with him that he employed the same method with me that he used with Mrs. Burrows.

I was stumped. I did not dare go back for another seance until I had figured out the method used, for fear Chester would become suspicious and deprive me of all further opportunity to "nail" him. I enacted the scene over and over again in my own rooms until my eyes were opened to his method.

The clue was a sudden recollection of Chester's clumsiness in replacing the firetongs into their holder. This gave me the solution. In order to be certain, I questioned Mrs. Burrows on that very point a number of times.

The average person is most unobserving. Especially a person at a seance in a darkened room for the first time. At any rate, after enacting the scene with Mrs. Burrows a number of times she, too, remembered that Chester dropped the firetongs from his hands during the seance, Also AFTER shaking out the ashes and BEFORE replacing the tongs into the holder.

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That little circumstance cleared the case and without further ado Chester was arrested and put behind the bars on a charge of "attempt to defraud." Here is what he did. How simple, and by its simplicity, how clever.

Mrs. Burrows, after writing her question, was asked to roll up the slip into a pellet and drop it into an envelope. Everything legitimate so far.

Chester then placed the envelope into the prongs of the tongs and while doing it, slightly pressed the edges of the envelope so that the pellet slid into the lower corner. This same lower corner then was placed between the grippers of the tongs and the envelope was then consumed by the flame, in full sight of the audience.

However, by pressing the prongs of the firetongs tightly together, the flames could not consume the corner held between the grippers, thus leaving the envelope corner with the pellet intact! (See diagram on page 80.)

After shaking off the ashes, Chester, in the act of replacing the tongs into the holder, feigned clumsiness and dropped the tongs on the floor, thus giving him the opportunity to bend down and pick up the pellet which was later read in comfort by the aid of a small concealed flashlight, while sitting at the table immediately across from Mrs. Burrows.

Simple? Very. But see it done. Its very simplicity makes this method a masterpiece in the hands of people like this medium, who, by the way, is quite safe now for a number of years to come.

Incidentally, Chester is in good company for the E. C. E. Company's stock salesman, who just "happened" to call on Mrs. Burrows is with him.

Too bad we couldn't lay our hands on Mrs. Taylor. She disappeared without a trace. Evidently she was pre-

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pared to get away on short notice. Possibly she is again on the high seas, looking for other victims and sending them to other mediums of her circle.

* * * *

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Mr. Davids modestly forgets to point out that he saved the \$50,000 pearl necklace and the \$10,000 cash for the young widow. He also forgets to explain the flashing light that created the impression of visitors from the "Other World."

Inasmuch as in many "spirit seances" flashing lights are used they are quite common "phenomena." This is a good place to explain them. Refer to Chapter XIV and see how they fooled Mr. Boss.

The medium uses a "reaching rod." A reaching rod is a contraption that collapses within itself. It may be only a few inches when folded, but when extended may be ten feet in length.

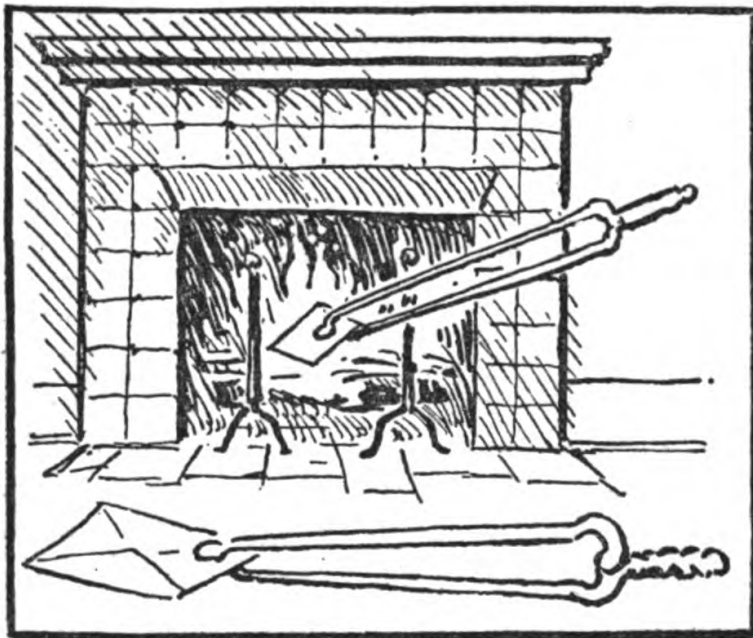
On the end of some reaching rods is a pincers device that will permit the picking up of spirit trumpets and the moving of them about. On others there is simply a catch at the top. In both cases referred to in this book, apparently the "catch-on-top" type was used. (See illustration on page 81.)

The reaching rod may be made of steel, much like a steel fishing rod, but the more approved types are made of fibre. The fibre rods are more flexible than metal ones and more noiseless. However, when they are to be used for picking up trumpets, or heavier articles such as tambourines, a medium may prefer a metal one.

The medium carries pieces of cardboard on which

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have been painted stars, crosses, signs and weird designs. These cardboards have been first painted with ordinary black paint on both sides. When the black paint has dried, the crosses, stars, etc., are painted on with luminous paint. They are then exposed to daylight so the luminous paint absorbs the light and when shown in a dark room will reflect the painted designs.



WHEN FIRE DOESN'T CONSUME!

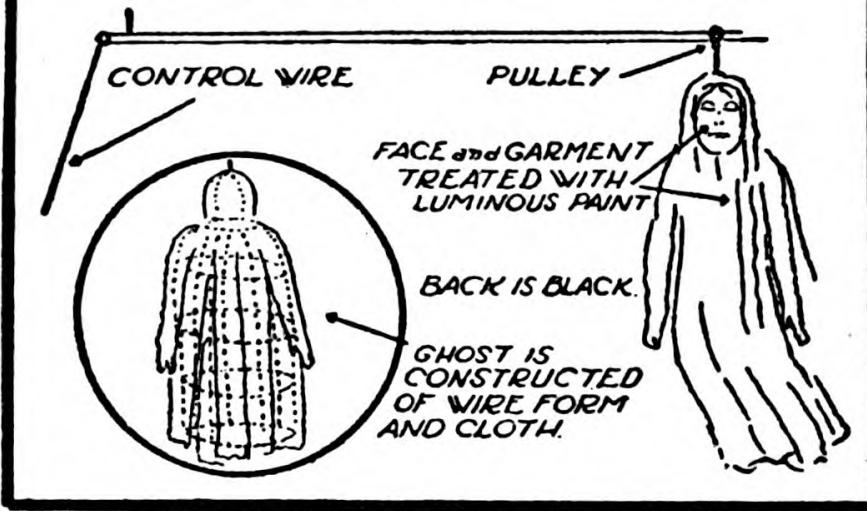
Envelope containing questions is held in fire tongs in the center of the flames. To the credulous everything seemingly is consumed. Note close-up of envelope in fire tongs. The part of the envelope holding the question is protected by the tongs—it cannot burn. The medium later recovers the question in the ashes and reads it. By such simple deceits do "Spook Crooks" defraud believers.

Luminous paint is desired rather than radium paint, for the former fades after a while and gives a greater effect of a ghostly visitor.

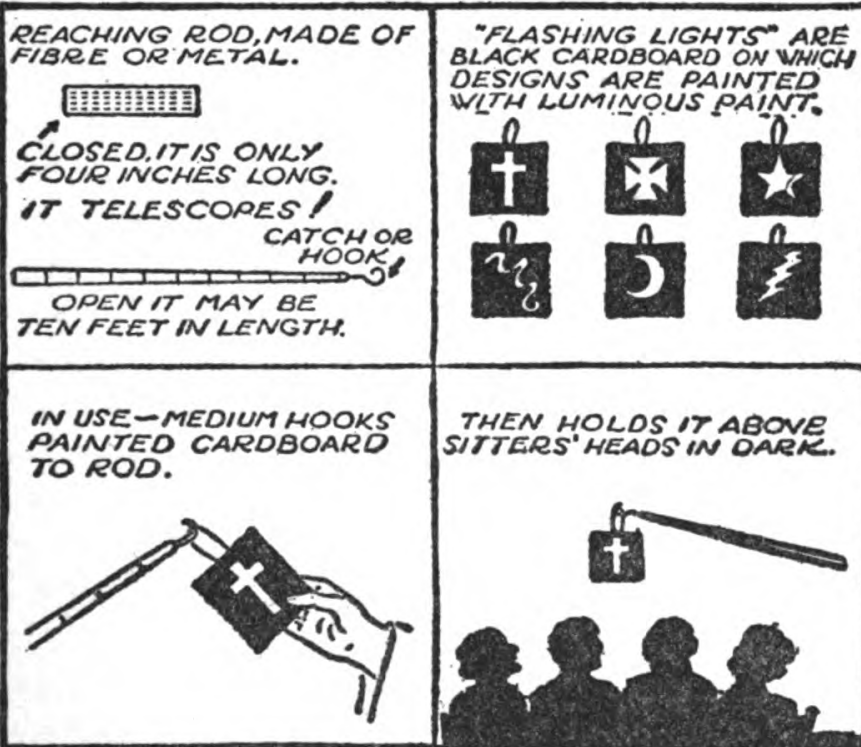
In use, the medium takes the reaching rod from some concealed pocket in his clothing, and the luminous painted

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HOW A "GHOST" WALKS



"GHOSTLY LIGHTS" EASILY PRODUCED



TRICKING THE CREDULOUS!

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cardboard from, say his inner vest pocket, hooks or clasps the card to the top of the rod, always keeping the black side to the "sitters" and then, while dangling the card high in the air, turns it about, so one instant it is seen, and the next instant has vanished.

By constantly turning the rod, the "lights" flash on and off for, of course, the black side is invisible at all times.

The "ghost" of the Chesters was made on a flexible steel form that was controlled from the rear of the room. (Note the illustration on page 81.)

The wire frame was covered with black cloth and the medium's good friend, luminous paint, again played its part. The frame was dressed with black cloth and the form of a woman painted on the front of it.

There was a trolley arrangement built into the ceiling of the room, unseen in the darkness. It had a pulley attachment so that it could be operated from the rear of the room. When the attention of the sitters was concentrated on the medium, his wife slipped in a rear door with the ghost. She hooked the figure on the trolley and pulled it to the front of the room, the way a housewife puts out her wash on an aerial clothes line.

The medium's wife was careful to hang the figure so that the back of it, which was black, was toward her. Thus, when she pulled the ghost to the front of the room, the sitters did not see it, until the figure turned around at the end of the trolley and started its journey back. Then the luminous front was exposed, and the audience saw it for the first time in amazement.

The medium's assistant, garbed in black and wearing a black hood and black gloves, unhooked the figure quickly, and left the room, taking the form with her.

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Mr. Davids, a distinguished mentalist and magician, in commenting on the effects used to impress Mrs. Burrows said:

“Diabolical as are all frauds’ tricks, none were as impressive as this burning of a message and the appearance of the ghost.”



CHAPTER IV

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

MR. X was made junior Senator from his State in 1894, and by now he had been in Washington so long as to be almost one of the sights of the city to be shown off, like the Washington Monument, to visiting rustics.

Late in life, Senator X married a young woman from his district. After two years of happy marriage, Mrs. X died in giving birth to a daughter, Fayette. Senator X was left alone with the child of his old age. He concentrated on her all the love that was in him; during his hard years of struggle, he had had to bottle up all kindly feelings, in order to trample his way ahead in politics; now he poured out many years' store of affection on Fayette. He surrounded her with every luxury which his growing wealth would permit. He sent her to the most exclusive schools.

The old war-horse of the Senate and his daughter were inseparable in private; the summer before Fayette was to enter Vassar, she traveled with the Senator as he campaigned through his district. After Labor Day they were to part for the first time. Fayette was setting off for college, to round off her eighteen years of brilliant promise, and enter upon a lifetime of fulfillment; the Senator looked forward to her as the prop of his declining years; indeed, he could have wished for no one more suited to the task.

Some of her friends gave Fayette a farewell lunch at a prominent hotel. When she returned home to go on with her packing, she began to feel dizzy. By supper-

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time she was too sick to come downstairs. The Senator called his physician, Dr. M. who examined the girl, looked grave, filled out a prescription, and called in Dr. H. The Eastern states were in the midst of an infantile paralysis epidemic of great severity. Dr. H. looked even graver than Dr. M.; finally the two doctors were obliged to confess that Fayette had caught the infantile paralysis. They hoped to be able to pull her through, they said, but it would be foolish to raise extravagant hopes so early.

The Senator refused to stir from his daughter's bedside. She got no worse, and she got no better. Telegrams came in avalanches; so did letters, flowers, gifts. Still Senator X camped in the sick-room. Ordinarily he looked fifty-five. After a few days of the vigil, his mouth began to sag, his wrinkles deepened, dark circles came under his eyes; he began to look all of his seventy-three years. Finally Dr. M. told him that he, Dr. M., would not be answerable for the consequences if Senator X did not get out for some fresh air.

So the Senator went out. Slowly he walked along Pennsylvania Avenue, looking into shop-windows without seeing what was there, bumping now and again into a passerby. At Eleventh Street, N. W., his wandering attention was caught by a gaudy strip of cloth across a window. With forced concentration he made out the legend painted on it:

**MADAME MARIE
EGYPTIANOLOGIST
ANSWERS QUESTIONS ABOUT
HEALTH, HAPPINESS, WEALTH, LOVE
READINGS, \$1**

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In his old days, the Senator would have made a wry face, and would have hurried on. Now, it did not seem to make much difference what he did; besides, this humbuggery might offer some slight distraction before he returned to the ordeal of the sick-room. Senator X went in.

The place was a vacant store, which did not appear to have been swept since the last tenant had gone. Madame Marie was fat and slovenly; she seemed to have washed last at about the time when the store was swept. Neither she nor her establishment was prepossessing. But the Senator was too exhausted to care, and somehow he became almost credulous as the clairvoyant began, "If you please, Sir, sit down facing me at thees table. So: I drop curtain, we are alone. Put your hands on table—wait, first cross palm. One dollar for five minutes, or for five dollars I tell you everything."

The Senator took out a dollar bill, then changed his mind and gave the woman a five. "I don't believe there's anything in this; but I'm interested in something. See what you can tell me about it."

"Verra well. You keep quiet, I talk. I tell you."

Madame Marie picked up the Senator's left hand, and studied the palm of it for some time. Then she began to talk. "You not just interested—you worry. I see some-one sick: You child. *She die*. You wife dead. You are powerful man—no use now. You have danger and trouble soon. But you have money."

For ten minutes she went on, solemnly telling Senator X about himself, his establishment, his affairs. He had often used exceedingly plain language in describing the folly of some fellow-legislators who were accustomed to patronize clairvoyants; now he found himself on the

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verge of joining the ranks of the believers. The woman talked on. It was all true. She *must* be real. She *was* real.

"That's all," she said. "You see I am right about death. Come again. I know great lady who talk with spirits. Come again. She help you."

The Senator had scarcely the strength to leave the place; he had to call a taxi to take him home.

There was an awful silence about the house. He tottered in haste up the stairs. The servants were standing in a group by the bedroom door. Someone sobbed. Dr. M. stood with bowed head next to the bed.

The Senator collapsed.

* * * *

The Senator was kept under the influence of opiates for twenty-four hours, during which time the funeral arrangements were completed. He was permitted to sit up in bed from time to time and to read the remarkable messages of condolences from Federal, State and City authorities that came by the hundreds, but the doctors kept him under constant observation.

Fayette died on a Monday and the funeral was set for Wednesday morning. The senator drowsed under the influence of morphine Tuesday night, but Wednesday morning, long before day-break, he was up and about. He seemed to be of this world, but not in it.

He looked over the scores of Kodak snapshots of his only child, stopping at each with tears of recollections, and passing on to the next in that half-daze that only a combination of grief and opiate can produce. His body lived, but his mind functioned only as it would when in a state of catalepsy.

Let us pass over the nightmare of the funeral. Grief begets grief, and the nation sorrowed with the bereaved

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father. Even the political opponents of the senator forgot party lines and bitter battles, and came to pass last tribute to the one bright spot in the private life of a man whose greatest fault was his unyielding character and lack of tact.

Wednesday night found the senator back in bed with Dr. Monroe in attendance, but the senator no longer needed opiates, for his rugged physical nature, despite his years, threw off the shock much better than that of many a younger man. Only the senator's brain seemed to be still affected.

He told Dr. Monroe of the fortune teller's statement, but the doctor passed it off as nothing,—“just a lucky guess,” he said. The senator was obstinate in his refusal to listen to the medico's explanation of how fortune tellers size up a customer, and by using applied psychology give random statements designed to hit home, for he told the doctor that when he felt better he intended to visit the seeress again.

According to all traditions Time, the great healer, should have softened the blow of Fayette's loss, but while the senator's body grew stronger, the deep hurt remained in his mind, dulling his intellect and making him just a senile old man, rather than the sturdy warrior of a thousand political battles. While the senate was closed for the summer, and the new session was not yet in sight, Senator X had nothing to think about except Fayette and the strange prophesy of the fortune teller.

To all those braving the heat of Washington in the summer, he told of Madame Marie's statements, and eagerly wanted to exchange experiences with any who had called on her, or any other type of seer. Some told

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of what astrologers had predicted, others talked of mind readers, and still more discussed spiritualism.

It all preyed on his mind to such an extent, that the senator finally made up his mind to return to the Egyptianologist as Marie termed herself. Leaving the house shortly after the noon meal one day, he found his way to her store. He had hardly entered when she came up to him and held out her hand.

"My frien'," she sympathized. "I read that the girl die like I say. That is too bad. I am glad you come to me again. I can help you."

The senator felt strangely at ease with her, and as he talked he watched her face, wondering subconsciously what attracted and repelled him at the same time. Her piercing black eyes seemed like two balls of fire set in a ghastly face, and the coal black hair fell in unkempt ragged wisps over her forehead. She seemed to be utterly out of place in this world, she was so similar to what his beliefs of what a witch of a thousand years ago resembled.

After a few moment's talk, Madame Marie began to paint in her quaint English a picture that more than attracted the unhappy man.

"I know a person," she said, "who knows all. This person, she is what you call a medium who talks with the dead, brings them to life again, and has them send messages to their relatives. She also can, with a camera, take your picture and bring on it the spirit of the loved one who is here no more.

"I will send you to her and she will help you more than I. She is an Englishwoman from my home town of Khedive, Egypt, and while she was there livin', she made many demonstrations to every one that she know the

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secrets of the old Egyptian priests. Even as I told you the girl would die, my frien' from her knowledge of the other world, could have told you the exact minute the Master Spirit would take your daughter to him."

Writing a name and address on a dirty piece of wrapping paper, Marie gave it to the senator who took it thankfully and gratefully, at the same time slipping a folded bill in her hand. Just as a drowning person grasps at a straw, so did he take the name and address in the hope that it would bring succor.

He hailed a taxi and looked at the paper. There was written, almost printed, "Mrs. Landsdowne, 4235 Grant Avenue." Telling the driver where he wanted to go, the aged senator leaned back thinking over the stories he had heard of what mediums were capable of doing, and wondering if Mrs. Landsdowne could duplicate the manifestations of bringing messages by getting one for him from Fayette. He did not quite understand what Marie had meant about the photography, but he hoped to soon find out.

His taxi finally pulled up in front of a small, well-built building, which his driver advised him was 4235 Grant Avenue.

A neatly dressed colored maid admitted him, ushering the caller into a large living room. While waiting Senator X inspected the decorations carefully. There was nothing out of the ordinary in the furnishings, although the walls were curtained heavily with black drapes, instead of being papered or painted. The chairs were only camp stools, and there were a great number of them folded against the walls, only three being open and in place about a small table.

He was reading a sign which advised:

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**"MEETINGS EVERY SUNDAY
AFTERNOONS AT 3—NIGHTS AT 8
TUESDAY AND FRIDAYS AT 8
CONSULTATIONS BY APPOINTMENT."**

when Mrs. Landsdowne entered. She was an extremely prepossessing woman past 50, garbed in becoming black, with her hair brushed back from her forehead.

She greeted the senator cordially with just that degree of deference which acknowledged she knew he was a personage, yet with a reserve that seemed to say, "We are of two different worlds."

The senator explained his errand.

"I have lost an only child recently. A strange woman, Madame Marie she calls herself, told me you might be of help to me in seeking knowledge of her. I prefer not to make myself known to you as yet, but if you can aid me, you need have no fear of the future, for I will provide handsomely for you."

"My dear sir," the medium replied. "I have no interest in you save that you are a mortal who seeks my aid, and as to your promise to help me financially, I am not interested, for my little congregation of believers in communication between the spirit world and this, keeps me alive materially.

"However, I wish you would write a message to your departed one and seal it in this envelope. I will see if I can get an answer."

Handing the senator a piece of paper and an envelope, she turned about as he commenced to write. She picked up a nearby book and commenced to read from it, paying no attention to her caller.

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Senator X wrote a few lines, "merely as a test" he said, and held the envelope tightly in his right hand as he put the pen back in his pocket with his left. His feelings were inexplicable, fear of failure to establish communication, doubt that it might be a trick, worry that if Fayette did hear, she might not answer: there were a thousand and one contradictory thoughts racing through his mind.

Mrs. Landsdowne seemed to sense his mental condition for she started a short discourse on her beliefs.

"We are strangers," she declared. "I am a spirit medium, duly ordained. You are a layman. I want to bring relief to you, if I can, by establishing contact with someone in the spirit world whom you loved while here. You state it was a child. You need not mention age or sex. I do not want you to.

"As you hold the envelope in your hand, in which is sealed a piece of paper with the query written thereon you wish answered, let me explain that science agrees with me that there really is a method of communication with the dead. Just where dreams leave off and reality begins, you must answer for yourself.

"Some are playing with fire when they attempt to pierce the veil of the Unknown, but I, for more than thirty years a student of Egyptian theosophy, have also imbibed the spirit of Isis, the Goddess of the Lost. When I go into a trance and talk to my control, who is Isis most of the time, I am in a form of self-hypnosis, my unconscious reflexes bringing me messages from the Other World that I could never get were I in a normal condition.

"This is no weird, mysterious business in which I am engaged, but rather the sacred carrying on of the tra-

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ditions of the ages old wizards of the pre-Christian era. If you recall the Bible states in its translated form, 'Face the devil and It will fly away from you.' The correct translation, according to my beliefs is 'Face the Spirits and They will fly toward you.'

"All our forebears knew that there were certain aspects of life that they did not know; they called these things supernatural. You may too, if you will. Not knowing how to combat them, or to bring them to their aid, superstition came into being. Materialists disclaim superstition, and say they have an answer to everything except communication with the dead. I will give you demonstrations of how spirit energy will make a table move, produce raps and obey my commands. Science will not explain these things.

"Now that you have learned a little of my creed, let me have the pen with which you wrote your question and also the envelope in which it is sealed."

The senator had listened to the flow of "logic" which he had hardly been able to follow, and was semi-convinced he was in the presence of one who really could bring him word from Fayette. As he complied with the medium's request, he noted that she did not even glance at the envelope.

She laid it down on the table, took up the pen, and asked

"Do not give me the year of your child's birth. Give me, though, the date."

"March 12th."

"I will write that on the sealed envelope."

Suiting the action to the word the medium wrote the birth date on the envelope Senator X had sealed, using her knees as a writing table.

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"With your permission, let us now move away from each other. We will leave the envelope on the table, but keep your mind on the question. No, we won't do that. You pick up the envelope and hold it while I prepare to go into a trance condition."

The senator reached for the envelope, moved to where the medium indicated he was to sit, and waited.

As soon as the medium took her seat, she closed her eyes, began to rub her forehead and a few seconds later she began to sway in her seat. She then moaned and groaned as though in agony, and as the unearthly sounds came from her lips, Senator X sensed the unnatural. To his religious mind, it was an ungodly thing she was trying to do, this speaking with the dead.

Slowly the moans grew less and less, the medium stopped swaying and began to mutter:

"Isis, I believe in you and the spirits that are your slaves. Before me is a mortal who seeks solace at your feet. Please, most gracious and most beautiful, place in my mouth words you would speak.

"The pet name that this mortal called his little girl who has just joined us in this side of the void is 'general.' "

The senator started to rise, put his hand to his heart and sank back in his chair for the question that he had written was:

"What pet name did I call Fayette?" and he felt that no one outside of his immediate household knew this, for after the great French general La Fayette, he had nicknamed his girl 'general.'

The medium appeared to take no note of what had happened for she continued:

"The little girl was just past 18. She loved her father

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and welcomes being able to come to him in Spirit. Just as she told me her father's pet name for her, in answer to the question, she sends word that she is happy and content in spirit and wants her father to come regularly to talk with her through me."

The medium's muscles seemed to jump and contract. She stopped talking. She groaned, moved her head as though it were dislocated, opened her eyes and asked:

"Did I get a message through for you? While under control I do not understand what my lips say, for you must realize that the words you hear, come direct from Spirits, I serving only as a medium through which they can talk."

Senator X did not answer her for a moment. His eyes never left hers, for a few moments the analytical brain that was the pride of his home state was functioning, attempting to fathom the possibility of communication, and the possible trickery of the medium, but love of Fayette, his age, and his actual desire to be convinced, overcame the desire to materially figure out what really happened.

"Mrs. Landsdowne," he said slowly. "I have heard of wonderful things that mediums have done, of the solace and comfort their actions and words have brought others, but I have always scoffed. I do not say that I am entirely convinced that communication with spirits is possible at all times, but I do believe, and feel, that what I have just heard is a perfect demonstration of the possibilities of spirit intercourse."

"Yes," replied the medium. "But, what happened?"

Reaching for the envelope which he had replaced on the table, the senator carefully examined it, saw the flap was still sealed, held it up to the light to see if one could

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look through it, was satisfied that it was impossible for any eye to penetrate the paper, tore open the end, took out what he had written and silently handed the question to the medium.

"The answer to this question was one I do not believe ten people in this world know. Through your lips I received the correct answer. I am too shocked to stay longer today. I will return again. Permit me to leave."

Practically winded from the strain and excitement, the senator rose. He extracted his card and handed it to Mrs. Landsdowne.

"I am Senator X. From now on I am at your service. What do I owe you for this demonstration?"

Mrs. Landsdowne bowed, took the card, but refused any money.

"I am glad to have been of service to you, senator," she stated in a most convincing tone. "I did not know who or what you were when you came. I did not care. I just wanted to be of service. If you wish, later on, you may become a patron of this little group which believes in me, but today there is no fee."

Thanking the medium, the senator made his adieu and went down to the taxi which had been waiting. All the way home, the senator kept thinking of Fayette and the message, until his tired brain refused to function longer on the subject.

* * * *

For two weeks after Senator X had his experience with the medium, he read Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Oliver Lodge and Hereward Carrington on the question of Spiritualism. He wanted to believe communication was possible, but some unknown restraint always seemed to hold him. He argued with himself, mentally quoting

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something from Doyle one minute and something from Lodge the next. Then he read his Bible and there found that "it is not well to hold converse with the spirits."

His mind was constantly in a turmoil. He studied the moves that Mrs. Landsdowne had made with the envelope, trying to convince himself that it was a trick, and at the same time to prove that Fayette really came in answer to the medium's call. He was in a dilemma that he felt could only be answered by visiting her again.

Accordingly he phoned her, and made an engagement for that afternoon. Arriving at her house, he was amazed to see two cameras in the living room and Cooper Hewitt lights strung over the ceiling, until he recalled that Marie had mentioned something about photography to him.

Mrs. Landsdowne chattered aimlessly for a while and finally broached the subject of spirit photography, a subject that Sir Arthur had gone into most thoroughly and deeply.

According to the great English author, creator of Sherlock Holmes, spirit photography was the most genuine means of proving communications with the dead. He exhibited thousands of photographs in which strange and ghostly heads appeared in a manner that he stated was supernatural, but he did say many examples of it were "faked."

Mrs. Landsdowne invited the senator to pose for a photograph expressing the hope that "perhaps Fayette would appear in the finished print." He was anxious to try it, but also reluctant. Words can not explain the cross purposes at which his mind was working.

However, he hopefully waited the next step. The medium stated that because of the many frauds that had been perpetrated in the name of spirit photography,

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(here she quoted Doyle at length) she preferred not to take the picture until the senator himself had purchased the photographic plates needed. She said that there was an Eastman supply house nearby and she would walk there with him while he purchased them.

The senator did not feel much like walking but agreed, as he was anxious to have the test picture taken. It was only a five minutes walk, but it tired him, so when they approached the clerk, it was in a very weak voice that he ordered what he had been told:

"Two boxes of Speed 5 x 7 plates, please."

Mrs. Landsdowne interrupted and asked the clerk to please take half a dozen boxes from the shelf and let someone select two boxes from the lot, for she explained:

"We are doing some special photography and I want to be sure the plates are freely selected."

A customer, waiting to be served, selected two boxes from those the clerk took from the shelf, astonished to be requested to do so, but obliging because he recognized the senator. These two boxes the medium handed to the senator and asked him to examine the seals. Satisfied that the plates were as packed at the Eastman factory, he wrote his name across the seals in obedience to the medium's request. He was now certain the plates were fresh and untampered with.

Arriving back at her home, Mrs. Landsdowne took the senator to a small room fitted up as a darkroom. Here she explained that she didn't want him to let the plate out of his hands. She told him to select one box, cut the seals, and then she would put out the white light and turn on the red which is a safe light for loading plates or developing them.

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Taking up a knife the senator cut the seals, and the medium switched on a "Wratten and Wrainwright Safe-lamp," the standard developing light. As the weak red glow permeated the darkroom, Mrs. Landsdowne told the senator to take one of the glass plates out of the box and to insert it in the plate holder that she held. He did so and the medium replaced the dark slide that would not be drawn again until the plate holder was in the camera.

She then took up another plate holder of different make, "for the other camera," she explained, and asked the senator to load that holder also. He did as bid and was certain that the plates had not been tampered with and that everything so far was absolutely honest and above board. (Note: It actually was.)

Telling the senator to cover up the unexposed plate so that she could turn on the white light again, she handed him both of the loaded plateholders, after he had replaced the black paper wrapping as instructed. They then went to the living room where the two cameras were standing in the same position they had been in when the senator arrived earlier in the day.

"I want you to sit almost motionless in this chair," the medium said, "while I focus the camera on you. I do not guarantee that I will be able to produce the results you want today, but we at least can try. Please fix your mind on your daughter and have thoughts of no one else. When I am ready to take the picture, I will take one of the plateholders, which contains the unexposed plates, from you and place it in the camera."

As the senator took his seat, the medium turned on the Cooper Hewitt lights. In the soft green glow of the flickering tubes the entire room took on a ghastly hue, en-

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hanced by the thoughts of the sitter. After focusing the camera carefully, the medium closed the shutter, and advanced to the senator.

Taking one of the plate holders from him, and telling him to place the other on the floor beside him, she walked back to the camera and inserted the plate holder in the proper place, always keeping it in view so the senator could see that no substitution was made.

She then withdrew the slide so that when she pressed the shutter release the plate would be exposed. Taking hold of the bulb she walked closer to the senator whose face was a study of hope and doubt.

"As I press this bulb," she said, "I want you to have no mind for anything except Fayette. I will silently pray to Isis that she will send the spirit of your child to this room so that she will appear in the picture with you. I hope and pray, but promise nothing."

The senator sat rigid. His thoughts were only on his child. The medium's face in the colored light took on a look almost spiritual in its ecstasy, and her eyes looked squarely at the subject she was about to photograph. She raised her hand with the bulb visible:

"Steady now," she ordered.

Click. The shutter opened and closed. The picture was taken!

"Let us hurry now to develop it," the senator asked.

"No," the medium explained, "spirit pictures must be taken in twain, two at one sitting. The next picture will be one of nothing but that black curtain. It may be that we can get a picture of Fayette alone against that dark background. Anyway, we can try."

The senator could hardly believe his ears.

"You mean," he queried, "that you will take a picture

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of that curtain and we will see Fayette's picture in the result?"

Moving the camera away from the position where it had been, the medium took up another type, a 5 x 7 Press Graflex with a huge F/4.5 Bausch and Lomb Zeiss Tessar lens. The first camera used had been a Century View Camera of the same size but with an ordinary portraiture lens.

She placed the Graflex on the table and moved both camera and table toward the curtain. When she was about five feet away from the curtain, she asked the senator to give her the Graflex plate holder. This she immediately inserted in the rear, explaining as she did so that she would focus from the reflecting hood, rather than through a ground glass in the back as one must with a view camera, such as she had first used.

Satisfied the camera was in focus, the medium instructed the senator to walk over by the curtain. When he reached there, she asked him to please flash the switch which controlled the Cooper Hewitt lights, on and off, as she instructed him. She then opened the shutter and began her orders:

"On. Off. On. Off. On. . . . Off. O.K."

Snapping down the mirror of the camera instead of dropping the focal plane shutter to cut off the light coming through the lens, the medium drew a deep sigh of relief.

"I've made the pictures. Let us now see what has happened."

Returning to the darkroom, with the senator carrying the two plate holders, all was ready for the development. The medium switched off the white and turned on the red

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light and walked to a table near the developing trays which reposed over a deep sink.

"Place the plate holders on the table and watch that these which we develop are the very plates you loaded. As a matter of precaution please write your name on this plate, which is the one we first exposed of you alone."

Picking up the plate the medium passed it to the senator who wrote his name across the bottom of it. Crossing to the developing trays, the medium asked him to immerse it in the pyro-metol solution, a standard and widely used developing fluid, as it cuts down the highlights and brings up the detail of the shadows almost at the same time.

Immersing the plate in the solution, he rocked the tray back and forth for a few seconds as directed by the medium, "so that the developer flows over all parts of the plate at the same time."

The medium then brought another plate to the developer and asked the senator to develop that one, also, "to see if Fayette really appeared on the black curtain." Inserting the second plate in the same large tray, it was a professional 11 x 14 developing dish, the senator rocked the tray again and again.

Slowly, but surely, an image appeared on the first plate they were developing. First came the senator's forehead, for the highlights develop shortly before the shadows, then gradually the features began to fill it. Just as the shadows began to show, high above the senator's head on the undeveloped plate another face began to appear!

Slowly it began to build up until actual features were visible! Senator X, unaccustomed to the view of a developing plate, could not distinguish the figure above his

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own head which, by this time, was clearly visible, but he heard the medium gasp :

"It's a girl's head! Fayette has come to us."

The senator staggered, gripped the end of the sink for support and earnestly asked :

"Are you sure? Can it be possible. How soon can I see?"

"Shortly," he was told. "We must 'fix' the plate by putting it in hypo so the image will be permanent. Look, there IS something on the other plate. It's a figure of the girl again. She IS with you!"

The senator trembled and could not realize that his child was again with him in spirit, while the medium constantly kept up a running fire of conversation about the sure return of the dead to those they loved in this world. He was convinced. Spiritualism is proven. He felt like a conqueror of the Unknown. He was content for the first time in weeks, his child had returned to him in spirit after death had taken the flesh in which the soul was encased.

By this time the medium had rinsed off the developing fluid in pure running water and placed both plates in the hypo bath for fixation. It was safe to turn on the white lights now, for the hypo stops development, and she did. Leaning over the still slightly unfixed plates, the senator saw the images of his child. On the plate with him was a picture of Fayette's head with the sweetest smile possible. On the other plate, the one photographed against the curtain, Fayette was garbed in flowing white and above her head was a halo!

Leaving the darkroom after the medium placed the plates in running water so the hypo could be washed from them, they returned to the living room.

"Are you now sure that spirits do return?" the medium

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asked in low tones. "Are you convinced that spiritualism is the religion that needs modern apostles to spread its gospel to every corner of the earth?"

At that moment the senator would have agreed to anything. Hadn't Fayette returned to him? Hadn't he personally seen that there was no trickery so that the pictures were truly taken? How could any one not in the spirit world have impressed those images on his photograph? Conan Doyle was right!

"Mrs. Landsdowne," the senator stated, "I am not without influence and I have plenty of money to do me for the few years left to me before I join Fayette in the spirit world. I want to help you now financially, as well as any other way you wish."

The medium hesitated before replying.

"Very well, senator. I will accept your aid. One thing I need badly is a larger home, or a hall, in which I can lecture to more people on the possibilities of my religion. We need about \$40,000 before we break ground. Of that I have \$30,000 pledged. How much can I count on you for the rest?"

"Why, the whole ten thousand, Mrs. Landsdowne. I will be glad to give you my check whenever you wish it for that amount, and as you get further along with the building, call on me for more. I really want to meet others of your followers and I shall spread the word of this miracle of Fayette's pictures all over Washington."

The medium casually thanked him, as though the ten thousand dollar pledge meant nothing to her. She then told him that she wanted to dry the plates now, and that if he would call again that night, when the "public demonstrations take place," she would give him actual photographic prints from which he could make enlargements

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for framing in his home. At the same time, she suggested he might bring his check.

* * * *

The senator returned to the medium's home that evening and was greeted by the medium who, instead of being dressed in the severe black clothes she had always worn, had donned the white flowing robes which have been used by mediums for almost half a century. She introduced him to a room full of people and then gave him a seat down near the front of the room in which a small altar-like platform had been erected and which she mounted after leaving her new follower.

"Let us open the evening's services with "Nearer my God to Thee" she said, and after we sing that favorite hymn of the late President McKinley, we will proceed to a new materialization service that I hope will be successful."

The entire room joined in singing the old hymn, the senator singing lustily with the rest. His fears of fraud having been allayed, he joined whole heartedly into the spirit of the meeting.

The singing over, Mrs. Landsdowne offered up a short prayer. The entire services, thought the senator were not far different than those in an ordinary church. "Only more modern," he thought.

The prayer was followed by a moment's silence. Then, Mrs. Landsdowne proceeded with the services.

"My friends, we are gathered here tonight to seek solace from our loved ones who have departed, but before we go any further, I want to introduce a new member of our little congregation, one whom you all know, Senator X, whose little girl departed this world

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just recently, but who already is sending messages back from Spirit.

"Only this afternoon Senator X posed for a photograph for me and when we developed it, his child's portrait was on the plate. Then we took a picture of just the black curtain, in the way you all know, and here also our efforts were crowned with success, for the departed one's picture was found on the plate. Here are the results."

The medium held the pictures in the air for everyone to see, and then stepping from the platform passed them to the senator who avidly took them. Tears came to his eyes as he examined them. Many of his nearby neighbors murmured "It's a miracle" and others stated "I, too, have had spirit pictures of my lost ones photographed with me."

As the senator kept looking at the pictures through his moisture-dimmed eyes, the medium returned to the platform.

"I also want to announce," she resumed, "that the senator has contributed \$10,000 to our work."

Applause stopped anything else she intended to say, and the senator had to get up and acknowledge the salutation.

"I am glad to be with you," he said. "When my little Fayette was taken from me, as far as the world was concerned, I was through, but now that I know that she is near me, I am content and I want to show material appreciation for the relief our leader Mrs. Landsdowne has brought me. I hope to work with you, to be with you, and to help you as much as I can. Let me now publicly present Mrs. Landsdowne with my check for \$10,000, as agreed."

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As the senator resumed his seat, the applause was renewed until the medium raised her hand.

"I want to thank you, senator," she said. "With these funds we can start work at once on the 'home-church,' as I shall call this new place of worship, and I really thank God and the Spirits for sending you to me."

Proceeding with the services, the room was darkened and the regular spirit trumpet * services started. The senator had never been to anything like this and many messages came to him from a voice which was ghostly.

The meeting over, the senator rode home content and happy and slept untroubled.

* * * *

The senator told every one in official Washington, and otherwise, what had been happening at the medium's meetings until many people dreaded to see him coming. From a shrewd political wizard he had become a doddering old man who was positively senile in his statements about the miracles the medium worked.

Some people were glad to curry favor with him and attended the medium's sessions. They marveled at the ** table rapping and table levitation in which they partook, and many went back and became converted. Others denounced it all a trick and laughed at the senator behind his back.

Time went on until the vacation season was over and the Federal employees and their superiors began to drift back into Washington. There is nowhere where gossip travels faster than in the Capitol of this country and soon every one knew of Senator X's experiences with the medium.

* See "Trumpets of the Dead," Chapter VI for complete explanation of spirit trumpet manipulation and effects.

** See Chapter VI.

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Many in high office came to him and secretly confessed their beliefs in the possibility of communication with the dead, others told him that astrology was a wonderful means of learning the future, and still others said that it all was a fake, one congressman going so far as to bring Senator X a copy of "A Medium Among the Spirits" a book written by the late Harry Houdini exposing their operations. The senator glanced at the book but paid no particular attention to the revelations in it.

However, someone showed him a pronouncement of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington which stated that "in general futures are not generally predictable" and that it had no evidence that spirit mediums really could get in touch with the other world.

All of this coming together, one thing on top of another, and because the shock of Fayette's death had been lessened by the months which had passed, caused the senator to start a private investigation of Mrs. Landsdowne. The shrewd old brain was functioning again, and he came to New York to talk to an investigator of the Parent Assembly of the Society of American Magicians which, in co-operation with Edward P. Mulrooney, Police Commissioner of the Metropolis, were engaged in a drive against fraudulent mediums and fortune tellers.

Privately, the senator confessed that he had spent more than \$18,000 in three months with Mrs. Landsdowne and wanted the magician to find out how much truth there was in her statements, and if the pictures were actually made with the help of the spirits.

The senator detailed everything that had taken place and certain of the stunts were immediately duplicated in New York by the magicians. This further convinced the

senator all was not well, so he persuaded a member of the Parent Assembly of the Society of American Magicians (who prefers to be nameless) to come to Washington with him.

Here the magician was introduced to the medium as a man who had just lost his only son. The medium expressed great interest, especially when he exhibited a photograph of "this boy." She was most sympathetic, and asked the senator to bring his bereaved friend to that night's meeting.

This was done and Mrs. Landsdowne asked to see the picture of his dead son. She passed this picture about the room and then started the services. The photograph was not returned to the magical investigator until the session was over, it being brought back by one of the congregation.

A meeting was held the next day at which were present the magician in his guise as "bereaved father" and the same performance that the senator had first gone through was undertaken by the medium with her "new follower."

The same trip to Eastman's for plates, the same posing for the photograph, the same darkroom procedure and the same results.

Let us, from here on read the report received from the investigator.

"After hearing about the first episode, the message in the sealed envelope being read, it was easy for the investigator to know alcohol had been used to make the envelope transparent.

"The medium probably used a pen with a false top. In this top was a sponge dipped in alcohol. Forcing a few drops from the sponge on to her dress, the medium rubbed the face of the envelope over the wet spot. It was then easy to read the message, for alcohol makes paper transparent.

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"The next thing was to answer the question. As Fayette was well known in Washington, it had been an easy matter to collect information about her, and somewhere, or someone, possibly even a servant, let slip the senator's pet name for his girl. The medium, with a good retentive memory, simply used her knowledge.

"The senator was 'hooked' from the first second he heard the medium state his daughter's nickname. In his grief he probably forgot that it was possible for the medium to have gathered that fact from others. She knew who the senator was, no one in Washington wouldn't, and the rest was easy.

"Coming now to the photography, everything was fair and square about the loading of the plates and the actual photography. As a matter of fact, it all looked on the level for a while, particularly when she let me take the plate holders and load them. It wasn't until she asked me to write my name on the bottom of one of the plates that I got wise to the racket.

"Of course, she was using the Rev. Father C. M. de Heredia's method. (See Fig. 1.) I was particularly sure of this when the 'my son's' picture showed up on the plate, for the photograph of 'my boy' was one of John Mulholland, first vice president of the Parent Assembly No. 1 of the Society of American Magicians. I had shown John's picture as my son's so I'd be able to convince the medium, in case of a bluff on her part, that I had the goods on her.

"You will probably recall that in Father Heredia's method he used a concealed, reduced picture of the one who was the 'spirit' which was covered with luminous paint of the calcium sulphide type which becomes radiant on exposure to light.

"In this method, when the medium hands the plate to the dupe to be signed, he has the image of the photograph concealed in his hand and because the lighter portions of the doctored photograph reflected rays of light, and the darker portions absorbed the rays, when he pressed his palm against the plate about to be developed, obviously the same transition of the silver bromide coating takes place as if the plate had actually been exposed to light.

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"SPIRIT" PHOTOGRAPHY!

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Study the drawings herewith carefully for complete details of how the medium works.

"Mrs. Landsdowne got the same results for me she got for the senator when Fayette's picture came up. On Mulholland's picture, the halo came out about his head the same as before. While John may deserve one, the time isn't ripe yet.

"Of course, you know that the medium used the time honored and time worn trick of getting the picture from me when she passed it about at the night meeting. One of her accomplices merely took it from the room while the so-called services were on and made a copy of it. This same copy was used in both pictures.

"The pin hole camera idea was in use to get the halo effect. (See Fig. 3.) The copy of the picture to be reproduced is put on in a regular printing frame and an exposure made in the regular way—but, note the picture. A pin hole had been made in the side of the bellows and through this, light streaked the halo. Of course, she must have wasted a lot of bellows to get the pin hole in the right place, but it must have been worth it.

"Pin hole photography is well known, having been used for years, and even today, such great photographers as Stieglitz, do much pictorial work with pin hole cameras. Either Mrs. Landsdowne or one of her assistants knows a great deal about photography, for it's no cinch to get the exposure through the pin hole correctly timed to produce the halo effect. As a matter of fact, it would have been easier to have an air brush artist paint a halo on the head of the photograph being copied, and then photograph the whole thing. That's what some mediums do.

"The use of the Graflex, or second camera was all for show. No picture was actually taken when the senator flashed the lights on and off. That was only for effect.

"What really happened was this—the medium has a plate prepared for the senator's visit, on which she had previously made a copy of Fayette's head with the halo in place. All she had to do in the darkroom was to 'swap' or exchange plates, substituting

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the prepared one (unseen, of course) for the one the senator thought he had personally selected and loaded.

"After we left Mrs. Landsdowne, and after I told her what a miracle it all was, I explained to the senator (a game old gentleman) just how the whole thing was worked. Of course, Madame Marie was an accomplice (as a matter of fact it might have been the medium herself, because I tried to check on the 'Egyptianologist' and found no trace of her), and as everyone knew the senator's face, it was easy for the fakers to get a picture of Fayette.

"With all the papers running her picture and discussing her death, it was very simple for the medium or one of her associates to find a photographer who would sell a picture of Fayette to her. While photographers won't sell pictures of their clients to anyone who calls, an old racket of the mediums is to phone and state 'this is a such and such a newspaper. We want a picture of Miss so and so. We'll give you a credit line,' and, of course, the studio attendants fall for the yarn.

"I explained to the senator other ways of working the spirit photo game and I'm sending you herewith the diagram I drew for him. Maybe you can use it in one of your stories. (See Figures 3, 4 and 6.) I also told him of other methods and he was quite convinced he was stung badly.

"However, he is certainly a good sport. He said that it was worth real money to him to have gotten the relief the medium's fakes brought him, but he was certainly sore at the deception practiced on other people.

"We got hold of an officer off duty, for the senator did not want to have Mrs. Landsdowne arrested, because of the publicity it would have caused him, and visited her home. The senator told Mrs. Landsdowne who I was, and she caved in. The officer showed his badge and there was a crying spell that, if it was acting, was a wonderful piece of craft.

"Anyway, we got back \$11,000 of the senator's money and Mrs. Landsdowne promised to return the rest within three

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months. She swore up hill and down dale that the senator was the only one who had contributed large sums and that the others he saw were all confirmed believers in her creed.

"She explained that she resorted to trickery only to hold her followers in line and that they, as well as she, firmly believed in spirit manifestations. Anyway, if the spirits do bring her messages, they certainly forgot to tip her off that I was on to her, and that the game was up."

The senator, while still a lonely old man, is throwing himself into his duties for his constituents, and now believes that

"OLD TIME RELIGION IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME"

for he is singing that grand old hymn back at his own church every Sunday.



CHAPTER V

THE SUN WORSHIPERS

CHARLES EDWARD PURDY, Ph.D., D.Sc., B.S., for more than twenty years, had been professor of Anthropology in a fairly large university in Middletown. His life was wrapped up in his studies of mankind and his wife Elizabeth, with whom he lived in a seven-room house on the outskirts of the city, happy and contented.

Dr. Purdy's living room walls were decorated with strange and weird relics of little known and forgotten tribes, which he had collected in his research and study. From the far-off Tibetan Mountains were death masks of wizards who hundreds of years ago had passed to the Great Beyond; from the Steppes of Turkestan were prayer rugs of the Mongol Horde of Genghis Khan; from the Golden City of Cathay were remnants of silk and wall coverings, and from the Inca district were fierce-looking stone clubs, some of which were stained a dark brown rust color—blood, dried centuries.

One day Dr. Purdy was hard at work on a manuscript which he was sure would be as startling as Einstein's Theory of Relativity, when he heard a faint cry, "Charles, come quickly!" from somewhere downstairs.

He ran down to the living room and was stunned to see his wife unconscious and crumpled over the threshold. He tenderly lifted her to the couch. There he tried to revive her, without success, and then phoned for the dean of the Medical Center of the college, an old crony of his.

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By the time the dean arrived, Dr. Purdy had undressed and put his wife to bed. The physician examined her, and then felt for a pulse that no longer beat.

"I'm sorry, Charles," he said, "but she has passed on."

"No, no," Dr. Purdy groaned, "it can't be." The cold man of science had vanished and left only a lonely man who felt the end of the world had come.

"Apoplexy," his medical friend replied. "At sixty we must expect such things."

Dr. Purdy was stunned and broken. He attended the funeral in a daze and returned to his home lonely, lost and disconsolate. He went away for a month to recover, never looking back as he walked down the path from the house which had seen the spark of his existence vanish.

Returning after his trip to the college, throwing himself into his work, he tried to find relief in study.

As Dr. Purdy left the house one morning, several weeks after his return, the postman halted him and handed him a letter. In the corner of the envelope was neatly printed "The Cult." Puzzled, he opened the letter and read:

My Dear Dr. Purdy:

We address you as a widower as well as a man of science. We do not know how much you have investigated the possibility of receiving word from the Other World, from your wife, but at a meeting last night our medium received word from her control, Lucarius the Sun Worshiper, that your earthly wife had joined his circle in spirit and had a message for you.

If you will make an appointment at your convenience we will arrange for our medium to see if she can get a message for you.

Yours in Belief,

THE CULT,

by Eve Wrigley.

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Dr. Purdy studied the letter, read it over many times, and put it in his pocket as he drove to the college. His mind was not on his students, but on the letter, so he let his assistant take over his classes.

He went to the college library to see what "authorities had to say about spirit communications with the living." Here he read voluminous tomes on mediums and spiritualism. He found Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were believers in the possibility of communication from the other world, but he also found learned professors' books denying the possibility.

Swayed between belief and disbelief in the possibility of getting a message from his wife, but alone, with time hanging heavily on his hands, he phoned Miss Wrigley who made an appointment for that night.

Still skeptical, but hoping against hope that some sign from his wife would be forthcoming, he entered the large frame building, on the door of which was a small and neat sign, "The Cult." Miss Wrigley herself opened the door and ushered him into a room simply furnished, yet impressive in its dignity.

On a table to the right of the room, near a huge red, plush-covered chair on which was a crest of Victorian days, were a Bunsen burner such as used in laboratories, and near it an ordinary coal stove poker. To the left of the poker was an oil lamp. The wick in the lamp was burning, casting an eerie shadow over the table despite the indirect lighting system which gave the room a modern effect. The glass top of the lamp glowed red.

In the room were three women and two men, and to all of them Dr. Purdy was introduced.

"They are all members of our cult," Miss Wrigley explained, "and we are waiting for Madame Lupe, our

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medium. All of us have lost some dear one from earthly contact, but we have remained in touch with them in the Spirit World through Madame Lupe."

Dr. Purdy listened politely, still unconvinced, while the others in the room gave evidence of what they had heard. Miss Wrigley changed the subject and began to talk of the Sun Worshiper of old. Here Dr. Purdy was quite at home, and for many minutes both discussed this cult of centuries ago.

"Madame Lupe had heard all the things of which I speak directly from the voice of Lucarius, who tells us he was a High Priest of the Sun Worshipers at Armac, a forgotten village in old Mexico. He tells us of the sacrifices of living virgins on the fire-block to appease the sun, and further explains that he and all the other priests were impervious to heat or fire because of the Sun God's will."

The entrance of a woman arrayed in a simple white smock broke up the talk. She was introduced to Dr. Purdy as the "High Priestess of our Cult," who has been given the powers of her control, Lucarius, "to withstand heat or fire and to receive messages from the Spirit World through him."

The long and apparently intelligent talk on the Sun Worshipers interested Dr. Purdy and made him less skeptical. When he was asked to sit next to Miss Wrigley he was ready to obey.

"All of us now will sing 'Glory Be to Jesus's Name' in order that, even though we believe in the life hereafter, our voices will carry to the Son of Man, Who may aid us in our quest for information from the Kingdom of which He is Lord."

After the singing, Madame Lupe asked all to join

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hands and form the Sun Worshipers' Circle, for she admonished them:

"Joined together in spirit though we may be, we must join our flesh so the good of all of us will flow through the unbroken link thus formed."

The seven joined hands and waited for the medium's next words. Dr. Purdy joined in the ceremonies wholeheartedly.

"Friends, earthbound creatures," the medium intoned, "we are gathered here to pay homage to those of us who are no longer on this sphere, but who have ascended to a better and brighter one. We also are gathered here to seek the solace and comfort of any words my control may bring from the other world.

"I will now release myself from the link we have just formed with our hands, but you will please all make the link again. That's right, all hold hands, just as you were, until I again return in spirit as well as in body."

With these words Madame Lupe rose, walked back a few steps, took a tchair covered with dark plush and seated herself. As she did she closed her eyes. As though this were a signal, Miss Wrigley began to speak.

"Watch closely our priestess as she goes in spirit to the Other World. Now she is of the Spirit World and no longer mortal until she is released from the trance of her control, Lucarius, the High Priest of the Sun Worshipers."

Hardly had Miss Wrigley stopped speaking when the silence of the room was broken with a loud scream from Madame Lupe. As all eyes fastened on the medium she began to squirm and moan and groan in most unearthly fashion. Her eyelids jerked spasmodically, although her eyes never opened.

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Suddenly she began to speak in some queer, unintelligible tongue. Louder and louder, faster and faster, she spoke in a hollow, deep and soul-stirring monotone. Suddenly she stopped. Her eyelids opened. The pupils of her eyes were not visible. Only the whites showed.

The silence was intense. A queer thrill ran through Dr. Purdy. His analytical mind was no longer working.

"Oh, Lucarius," moaned the medium, "thou and I have spoken in thy native tongue, whose syllables these earthbound know not. Thou, who knowest all things in the Spirit World, listen to what I say to, and of, those gathered, in the tongue they know.

"There is a newcomer here, one who neither knows nor is initiated. Bring to him some message or some sign that his lately departed is with you. In my mind place thy words in thy native tongue and I will translate them to him. Bring thou, now, the signs and words."

The medium rose from her chair as though she were walking in her sleep. The whites of her pupilless eyes looked ghastly. Her hand shook as though she had palsy. Her face was streaming with perspiration. It was flushed and unnatural.

"I ask thee," she pleaded, "do the things you did as a High Priest of the Sun Worshipers, through me, O great Lucarius! I will obey. Make me impervious to flame, even as thou wert in olden times."

Crossing to the oil lamp, which was still burning, with her bare hands Madame Lupe picked up its white hot glass globe! She then placed it on a piece of paper, which instantly blazed up. Crushing out the fire with her long tapering fingers, she cast the charred papers on the floor. The medium then held her hand in the center of the flames of the burning oil of the lamp!

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"Oh, great control, I have performed the first ritual of heat and fire and have come through untouched and unhurt. What other tests do you demand of me? I am unafraid, for no incarnated Sun Worshiper as I can be hurt by fire or flame if under your control. I wait to obey. Silently tell me."

Again the quiet became intense. The watchers had seen the medium deliberately place her hands in fire and not even get singed. They had seen her defy fire that burns and consumes. Dr. Purdy, in particular, was amazed and almost convinced that the medium possessed unnatural powers. He watched her intently as she moved the oil burner closer to her face.

With a loud moan and sudden twitching of her shoulders she threw her head directly over the flame and let her hair fall into it.

There was no smell of burning hair, no smoke arising from the tresses. No sound from the medium. As suddenly as she had thrown her hair in the flames she withdrew it. She then lit the Bunsen burner, which was attached to the gas jet. In the hottest part of this flame she placed an ordinary fire poker. As she waited for it to grow red-hot, she chanted:

"Oh, great priest of the Sun Worshipers, I prepare myself for the final ordeal, through which I know I shall pass unscathed under your watchful protection."

She opened the top of her dress, exposing the white flesh of her bosom. Her eyes seemed to be without pupils—only the whites showing.

"Lucarius, mighty one, in this gathering is the novice. Let him pick up the iron that now glows to a brilliance hardly surpassed by the sun whom we revere, and let him

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try to pierce or burn my heart while my soul is in your keeping!"

Dr. Purdy was reluctant to move. Madame Lupe almost pulled him toward the iron, which now glowed red in the flame. Her half-bared body, her wildly disheveled hair, her apparently sightless eyes, and the eerie, weird stillness of the room frightened him. Tremblingly he followed the medium toward the table on which rested the Bunsen burner and iron. He seemed almost unconscious of what was transpiring. Picking up the poker, Madame Lupe offered the cool end to him, holding the red-hot part in her bare hands! But he did not touch it.

Suddenly baring her entire chest to the waist, the medium motioned to him to take the red-hot iron and press it to her flesh over her heart, crying in that maddening monotone:

"Oh, Lucarius, the end is here if thou are not with me. Watch thou my soul. I believe in thee and thy Sun Worshipers!"

Dr. Purdy could not move. He was as though paralyzed. Fascinated, he watched the medium, who, with a sudden move thrust the poker which was still glowing red from the severe heat to which it had been exposed, under her left breast, directly over her heart!

Purdy gasped as she took the smoking iron from her flesh. She was not scathed! Silently she placed the poker back on the table, and where it touched the wood, it burned great scars in the table top.

Purdy fearfully returned to his seat as the medium went back to the throne chair, adjusting her dress.

As though talking to her Spirit Control, with head uplifted the medium chanted:

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"Now that I have proven myself to be of the Sun Worshipers, impervious to fire, let me ask you to bring from this Elizabeth, earth wife of the one who has just joined us, some message to her dearly beloved."

Dr. Purdy edged forward on his chair. The medium was going through contortions, with strange sounds of agony, moaning and groaning as she swayed. Then she began to speak again, never using an inflection but speaking as though she were learning a lesson and repeating it after her teacher.

"Tell Charles I am well and happy here. I never knew I was leaving him, nor did I feel pain when my soul and spirit came here, leaving my body behind. Tell him not to grieve or worry, for I will send him messages until he joins me in Spirit World.

"Tell him I see a condition of prosperity surrounding him. I see his book on which he has worked so steadily, and on which I helped him, become a great sensation throughout the world.

"Tell him further that though my physical body may not be with him as he writes, that my spirit hovers over him. I see a white dove circling over his head. It has alighted on his shoulder. It is a spirit dove and indicates peace for him. Ask him to continue coming to these meetings and I will bring him comfort and tell of the things that are to be. Farewell, oh, Charles. I go, but I return!"

The medium gave a loud shriek and put her hand to her mouth. She fell on the floor as though stricken. Miss Wrigley jumped up and ran to her. As she raised her, Dr. Purdy could see a white foam pouring from her mouth. Miss Wrigley washed this away with some water that was in the basin on the small table, and escorted

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Madame Lupe to her chair. Once seated, the medium opened her eyes and asked:

"Did I go through the ordeal? Did Lucarius come to me? Did I get a message for our new member?"

Those seated about the table now unclasped each others' hands and rushed to congratulate the medium. Dr. Purdy alone did not move. He was in a daze. Gracefully waving aside the compliments of the believers, the medium went to Dr. Purdy. Looking into his face, with eyes that seemed tender and understanding, she spoke.

"My friend," she said, "I understand. Do not fear or worry or doubt. Your wife is still with you, for as she lived with you in this world so does she now exist for you in the Other. Come often to me and I will bring you words of joy and comfort and advice from her."

Time went on. Dr. Purdy visited the home of The Cult more and more. He became a full fledged member. He spread the gospel to his fellow professors, even telling his students of the possibility of communication with the Spirit World. He contributed more and more of his savings to The Cult, and gradually grew so rabid on the subject that his friends avoided him, and his work at the college and on his book alike suffered.

After he had been a member of The Cult for about five months, during a regular seance patterned very much after that first session, Madame Lupe, "Speaking for Lucarius," said that the time had come to spread the news of the Sun Worshipers' miracles to other fields. Lucarius suggested, through the medium, that contributions be taken for the missionary work from all true believers.

At this same session a "message came through for Charles from Elizabeth" which suggested Dr. Purdy

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mortgage his home, and "as we had no children, take the cash surrender value of your life insurance policies, Charles, and give all your earthly possessions to the cause."

In the spirit of a Crusader, Dr. Purdy mortgaged his home, cashed his life insurance, and contributed the entire amount—twenty-four thousand dollars—to The Cult, giving it in actual cash to Miss Wrigley for the purposes of propaganda.

And he resigned his position with the university so that he could give his entire time to spreading the gospel of spirit communication throughout the world. His resignation was turned over to the president of the college at noon of the morning that he gave his donation to the cause.

Directly from the office of the college he went to the home of The Cult to surprise his fellow Sun Worshipers. He thought how happy they would be to know that he would give his whole time from now on to aiding them in the great work.

As he walked happily up the steps of The Cult home, he noticed the door was closed and that several people were attempting to get in. Wondering how so many people had been converted so quickly, much as a minister talks to his flock, he asked if he could do anything for them.

To his consternation one of the men at the door threw back his coat and announced that he was a deputy sheriff with a dispossess notice. Another said he was a collector for an installment furniture house. The only woman present said she had given Madame Lupe nine thousand dollars to invest in bonds for her, and another man said he was the husband of Miss Wrigley, who had "run away

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from him last year, taking with her his entire life's savings."

The deputy sheriff broke down the door at the insistence of the furniture collector. Everything was the same as when Dr. Purdy had left the house earlier that day. But on the table was a note that read:

"Do not look for us. The spirits have told us to leave."

There was no signature, but Dr. Purdy and the rest then knew the truth.

The deputy sheriff laughed and said, "It's lucky for them they got out of town, or I'd've pinched 'em for fortune telling."

As the rest of the crowd started talking excitedly, the woman screamed:

"My money is gone. I've been robbed. My nine thousand dollars is gone!"

Dr. Purdy fainted. The deputy sheriff caught him as he collapsed and carried him to a chair. He was revived finally and an ambulance from the General Hospital took him away.

For days he lay in a semi-coma, delirious and screaming for Lucarius and the Sun Worshipers. When his physical strength came back, his mind was gone!

He is today in a private sanitarium for the mentally feeble.

The newspapers unearthed the fact that Madame Lupe had been convicted in another city for fraud and had served time in prison under another name. They also discovered that almost seventy thousand dollars had been taken in by the medium from her dupes in those few months that she had operated in Middletown.

* * * *

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In the natural course of events a member of the Society of American Magicians played in Middletown. He collected all the data on Dr. Purdy's case and sent it to the author for analysis.

The entire fraud was the work of a clique which has been working the "Sun Worshipers' Racket" for more than forty years, and handing it down through the generations. To any one, college professor, scientist or layman, the "hot iron" game is most impressive.

To start with, the stage was set for Dr. Purdy's arrival. The medium had prepared for the fire test in a most simple way. This is how she was "impervious to fire and heat."

From a pharmaceutical supply house she had obtained one-half ounce of camphor and two ounces of aqua vitae. Then she had bought one ounce of quicksilver and one ounce of liquid styrax and two ounces of pulverized red stone. To stand the "fire test of the Sun Worshipers" she followed these directions.

Dissolve the camphor in the aqua vitae. Shake well, then add the quicksilver and styrax. Shake well again until there is no sediment. Add the pulverized stone. Shake the entire mixture and let it stand about twelve hours. There may be a slight reddish tinge to the solution, but this is not a drawback if the medium has a ruddy skin.

Rub the mixture well on the parts of the body to be subjected to the flame or hot iron. Many mediums rub the solution on the soles of their feet and walk over burning hot coal stoves, or iron grates under which a vicious fire is burning. The solution, if it is to be used on the breast with its tender skin, should be allowed to

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**HOW EXPERTS
ARE IMPERVIOUS
TO HEAT ~**


1. MIX THESE

LIQUID STYRAY 1oz AQUA VITAE 2oz QUICK SILVER 1oz


CAMPHOR

**PULVERIZED RED
STONE - (2 oz.)**

2. Then RUB ON CHEST



**EFFECT OF
ECTOPLASM
FROM
THE MOUTH IS
SOAPSUDS.**



SUN WORSHIPER LORE

You, too, can be a "Sun Worshiper," ram white hot poker into your breast, produce ectoplasm from the mouth, and generally be a chum of Lucarius. Read directions on page 129 carefully.

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dry, and then another application made immediately before the performance.

The styrax is a product of myrrh and absolutely prevents the camphor from igniting. The camphor, of course, is the base of the solution. Any one skilled in stage craft, as are mediums, can make the Sun Worshipers' test most impressive.

The hair in the flame effect upon which the medium also depends is a simple application of known chemicals. Take a teacup. Dissolve all the ordinary table salt in this cup that will dissolve. In another cup dissolve a heaping tablespoon of a borax washing soda in warm water. Mix the two in a bottle. The hair is soaked in it. A fine solution is made by boiling two tablespoons of soda in a cup of water. After it dries the medium combs out the residue, and is ready for the "test."

Readers won't care to experiment with their hair, but dip a handkerchief or necktie in the salt and soda solution, let the object stay in it for a short time, and after it dries, put in any flame, large or small. It won't burn if left in the fire even for several minutes.

It may seem strange that a man as learned as Dr. Purdy would be taken in by the Sun Worshiper "racket," but think back. After twenty-four years of married life his wife died suddenly. His mind was in a turmoil. At his age, sixty-two, naturally he could not think as clearly and sharply as at thirty or forty. The stress of his emotions and the weirdness of the spectacle dimmed his powers of perception.

His case is not the only one of a learned savant who believed in the gibberish of a fake medium. The simplest tricks of mediums are seldom seen through by even very clever men. That is a question of psychology. The clever

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man thinks straight and true, the fortune teller or faker along the lines of fraud.

Obviously, the facts of the life of Dr. Purdy and his wife had been gathered by Miss Wrigley or Madame Lupe from neighbors, storekeepers and students in the professor's classes.

The "foam" gushing from the mouth of the medium is passed off on the unsuspecting believer as "ectoplasm." It is simply done. The medium has a small piece of soap concealed in her costume. Taking it out unseen she makes a quick move to her mouth and places it under her tongue. As she falls to the floor in a fake faint, she rubs saliva against the tongue, producing a lather. Her assistant, if you recall, quickly "revived" her, and in the process, wiped the soapy foam away. It's effective, this stunt, though it doesn't taste very well.

Do not confuse genuine and sincere spiritualists with fake mediums. Genuine spiritualists never recommend oil stocks, investments, or charge exorbitant fees, nor do they "materialize" ghosts. They are sincere believers in their faith.



CHAPTER VI

TRUMPETS OF THE DEAD

GEORGE LUIS, after wearily visiting every employment agency on Sixth and Seventh Avenues between Twenty-Sixth and Forty-Fifth Streets, and hearing nothing but the same melancholy, discouraging "Nothing today" at every stop, was tiredly plodding his way uptown to his home on East 53rd Street near Second Avenue. Every step he took was torture, every move physical and mental anguish, for he had been out of work for eleven weeks and his savings of many years were gradually dwindling away, for no matter how economically he lived, it still took money, and a great deal, to support his little family.

As he walked slowly onward, he traced mentally every step in his life since his arrival in New York twelve years ago. He recalled how he had almost jumped for joy when the Lamport & Holt boat, which had brought him from his native land in Brazil slowly steamed past the Statue of Liberty, which seemed to him to proudly hold her torch high in the air to welcome newcomers to the "Land of the Free." He remembered how he got his first job as a construction helper on the subway because he had come with such good recommendations from the American bridge builder for whom he worked in South America.

The recollections of his rapid promotions as he learned English flashed through his mind; the day he met Lola, daughter of Jose Huerta, the cigar maker, her promise to marry him when he had taken out his first citizenship

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papers, their marriage, and the coming of the babies, all marched in steady procession across his aching brain. The steadily growing bank balance, for he and Lola lived simply, the day he received his final papers which made him an American citizen, all were reviewed as he slowly walked on.

Then the depression, the curtailing of employment that found him, for the first time in twelve years, without a position. It was like the unfolding of a play on a movie screen, this vivid succession of every phase of his life. Each time he put his foot forward, another thought of the past came to him.

Slowly but surely he reached 53rd Street, and as he turned in at the entrance of the flat in which he lived, he wondered what he could tell Lola, and how he could tell her, that another day had passed without his getting a position.

Going up the three flights of stairs, he kept thinking and thinking. His mind raced as his feet faltered.

He had hardly time to put his key in the lock when the door of his flat opened. Lola threw her arms about his neck, kissed him as only the Latin American women can, and asked, with hope in her voice, but fear in her heart:

"You did get something, George, didn't you?"

The words seemed caught in his mouth. He tried to talk, but couldn't. It was hard to disappoint such a help-mate. He slowly shook his head in the negative.

Lola smiled bravely at him, took his hand and led him into the little room that served as living room during the day, and bedroom at night. They only had a three room apartment and the three children slept in what was a dining room at meal times.

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"Don't you care," she said lovingly. "Things will get better. I just know they will for today, a Mrs. Paestro, who lives down the block, called to make my acquaintance and said that when things looked blackest to her, after she had lost her husband last month, it all turned out well. She met a woman who talks with the dead, and because she knows the spirits so well, they give her advice."

George's superstitious mind ran quickly over the possibilities of a ghost who might help him, but gave it up sadly for none of his family were dead, and besides the church forbade such intercourse with the spirits.

"The friend of the dead," he told Lola, "might help this Mrs. Paestro, but she couldn't help me, for I know none who is dead, and besides you know the father at the church told us such things are false. Anyway, how could she help us? All I want is a job. Put the thought of ghosts out of your mind. It is not well even to think of them."

With this, he made the Sign of the Cross, and took off his coat, through with the subject. But Lola continued, not seeming to mind George's lack of interest:

"Mrs. Paestro told me that ghosts of all sorts came and gave this woman messages, whether or not they are spirits we knew in real life. They call her in English a 'spirit medium'. That means that she acts as a *hombre ag*—there I go talking our old native tongue—in our new language she's a 'go-between' between spirits, and what she calls the 'earthbound'. Earthbound people are those living in this world just like we are now," she said.

"Why, Mrs. Paestro told me she had given this spirit medium \$2,000 which she got after her husband's death, and that the ghosts had doubled it in three days. Now,

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won't you talk about ghosts? If they'll do that for Mrs. Paestro, they'll certainly do it for us!"

"Lola, be quiet. You know Father Kelley told us at the last retreat at the mission that no one could talk to spirits or ghosts and that the Church wouldn't let any one go to a person claiming he could talk to the dead."

And as they sat down to the little supper Lola had prepared, all talk of mediums was dropped, for the children came in from the park. They ranged from sixteen months to five years in age and had been taken out by one of the neighbors. The elder two greeted their father affectionately, and the baby cooed in his arms as he took her from the friendly woman. Lola lovingly arranged her little family about the table, and they prepared to eat.

Supper over and the dishes washed, they put the children to bed. George and Lola talked but little after these chores were done, although both tried to cheer the other up. Their davenport became a bed, they undressed, knelt in prayer and another day was over for both of them.

* * * *

George was up and about at 6 o'clock on the following morning, ready for another day of struggle. He was always first in line at the better agencies, because even in Spanish there is a proverb, "The early bird catches the worm." With four mouths to feed, he wanted to get what work he could to keep the house going, for he dreaded touching the few thousand dollars left of his savings. Lola gave him a sustaining breakfast, economical but healthy, and he was off.

Then the children had to be looked after. Mornings passed quickly for Lola, for whether George found work

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or not, her work as mother and housewife was never done. For when the mornings were over, lunch time came. And when lunch was served and the dishes washed, came the time for the children to be taken out. And when the children came back from the afternoon in the air, they had to be bathed and dressed. Then came the preparation of the supper. Monotony lightened only by love and duty.

This day the children never seemed more disobedient, the lunch dishes never seemed harder to do and life never seemed to hold less. In the midst of this despondent despair, the bell rang. It was Mrs. Paestro, all wreathed in smiles and obviously at peace with the world.

"Well, dearie," she commenced, after she had greeted Lola with an all encompassing embrace, "are you and that husband of yours ready to come with me some time to the medium who'll ask the ghost about your making your fortunes?"

"No," replied Lola unhappily. "Our religion tells us not to have traffic with the dead. George and I talked about it, but we are determined not to do it. Though, Lord knows, I'd like to try. Things never seemed blacker. George can't find work, this apartment is so tiny, the children are on my nerves and while we are told 'Heaven will provide' I'm beginning to doubt. Though that in itself is a sin."

Lola began to cry hysterically. The feeling of helplessness, that nothing was worth while, that her lot was an unhappy one, coupled with the constant dread of seeing the hard won savings of many years wiped out, completely unnerved her.

Mrs. Paestro tried to calm her, but to no avail. She only began to quiet down when Mrs. Paestro told her

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that she'd go herself to the medium and ask her to talk to the ghosts on George's behalf.

"Then, it's no sin for you," Mrs. Paestro comforted her. "I'll find out for George and you, and then you'll not be disobeying your church."

Lola brightened up immediately. Surely there was no sin connected with that, she repeated to herself again.

Mrs. Paestro left for the medium immediately. Lola began to sing as she dressed the older children and changed the baby. Maybe, the Lord hadn't deserted her. Maybe the ghost would know just where George could get work.

How the rest of the afternoon flew. Oh, if Mrs. Paestro would only get back before George. Hurry, hurry, hurry, she wished. Footsteps. The bell rang. Mrs. Paestro was back!

"What news," she cried. "Will George get work? Will the ghosts tell the future for us? Will the medium advise us? Quick! Tell me all, amigo."

"I've good news indeed. The medium says that George will get work today or tomorrow. And the salary will be a good one. She says that this is the only message the spirits will deliver through a third party, but that they have many more for you or George if you call in person."

Mrs. Paestro had hardly stopped speaking when George's steps were heard outside the door. Lola didn't wait for him to use the key. She threw the door open. George was all smiles. He picked her up, raised her in the air, kissed her and cried:

"Honey, I've got a job. A real job. The B.M.T. starts building the extension in Queens tomorrow and I'm fore-

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man for the sub-contractor! Think of it. Foreman! Thanks be to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

As George let Lola to the floor he made the Sign of the Cross. Lola did likewise. As she did, George spied Mrs. Paestro for the first time sitting on the davenport. Lola introduced her to her husband.

"Congratulate me," he demanded of her. "Though you be a stranger, I know you will be glad for Lola says you have befriended her."

"I certainly will, but I knew it," the visitor answered complacently. "I just told your wife that the spirit medium brought me word that before the sun went down tomorrow night, you'd have a position."

"No, it could not have been the medium," George stated emphatically, "It was the Lord, for only last night I prayed to Him for aid."

Mrs. Paestro left after exchanging a few commonplace remarks, and the talk turned again to the position George had obtained. Lola was not shaken in her belief that the ghosts had something to do with the getting of the foremanship, while George was equally emphatic in telling her to forget such nonsense.

For days the arguments went on, ghosts versus old time religion. Repeating part of a visiting priest's sermon of which they had a printed copy, George argued, reading from the statement of the Church:

"Does it not seem amazing to you that darkness, an omen of the Prince of Evil, concealer of crime and vice, friend of murderer and thief, can be converted to the use of something passing under the guise of religion? Are not our services held in the light? Are not our actions visible? Why, then, does this strange religion require darkness, the blanket of Orcus to conceal its actions? We can almost change the word 'actions' to 'villainies.'

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"In America it is given to all of us to worship as one wills, and it does not behoove any of us to criticize the religion of others, but this new menace to the peace of the nation, this conversing with the dead, surpasses religious devotions. It wrecks the home, it leaves poverty and misery in its path, and many times causes death and suicide.

"No one is given the power to foresee or prophesy. All that attempt it defy the laws of God and man and must suffer. Remember the words of St. Paul in which he says, without reservations, *'It is not well to look upon the dead or to try to learn their tongue, neither is it wise to use the power of prophesying or to foretell the future!'* Elsewhere he condemns witchcraft and fortune telling by the method of summoning the spirits of the dead.

"In all of the writings of this apostle, one finds that women can not act as ministers, priests or prophets, yet in this new religion, women for the most part act as so-called mediums between the living and the dead. To our parishioners, does the Holy Catholic Church of Rome, which was founded by our Lord when He said 'Thou art Peter and on this Rock shall I build My Church,' which has survived through the ages, say to you 'Have no traffic with those who would have you believe they converse with the dead, for to God alone is given this power.'"

As George finished reading these paragraphs for the fiftieth time, Lola nodded her head slowly, and hopefully asked:

"George, maybe the Church didn't mean this particular medium. She knew about your job, and certainly it will do no harm to just talk to her."

Again the argument continued until early in the morning, George heartsick and unhappy, Lola stubborn and uncertain.

When George left for work in the morning, Lola went to her friendly neighbor and asked if she'd look after her children for a while. When she agreed, Lola almost

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ran to Mrs. Paestro's home nearby, of which she had the address, and blurted out:

"George won't listen about the medium but I have a feeling I *MUST* talk to her. Won't you take me?"

Mrs. Paestro explained that she never had been to a medium's in the morning, but would be glad to telephone to make an appointment. This done, Lola and she left for the medium's home.

Arriving, they were ushered into a room heavily curtained with black drapes. The silence as of the tomb was impressive. The room was bare except for an ordinary kitchen table, painted black, and some chairs that also were of the same color. There was a Bible in the center of the table, and a small incense burner giving off an odd erotic perfume. It was weird, this setting, to the visitor who had come to see what the future held for her doubting husband and herself.

Mrs. Paestro whispered:

"I've actually seen ghosts in this room, dear. They may be here now, but we can't see them. The medium can, however, and they bring her messages."

The door opened quietly. There was no sound as she crossed the room to where her visitors sat. She stood in front of them. She was a middle-aged woman of drab appearance; sincerity seemed written in her face. In her hand she carried a long, cone-shaped trumpet made of metal, painted jet black.

Mrs. Paestro and Lola rose. The former spoke:

"Mrs. Clark, permit me to introduce Mrs. Lola Luis, a friend of mine who is anxious to know what the spirits can tell you about her husband and herself. This is the lady whose husband I asked you about. You told me he would get a position, and sure enough he did."

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In a deep monotone, without inflection, Mrs. Clark acknowledged the introduction.

"My dear, I am glad to welcome you to my modest little material home. My body dwells here, but my spirit, of course, is in the other world. If there is anything I can do for you, I will be glad to try to get advice from my control, the great Indian guide, White Feather."

Lola smiled sheepishly.

"There is nothing special, Mrs. Clark," she said. "I just wanted to visit you, Mrs. Paestro has said so much about you, including telling me how your advice had made so much money for her, that I felt an urge to come."

"That urge," replied the medium, "was not unnatural. One of my friends in the Spirit World came to you and told you to come here. However, let us see if the spirits are with us this morning. Let us sit down. Mrs. Paestro, sit here; Mrs. Luis, you sit here, and after I turn out the lights I will join you.

"When I sit down, all three of us will join hands. Keep a tight grip on each other's hands, as well as on mine. I will then see if the spirits will make the table rise, or if they will speak to us through rapping answers to my questions. I will place this trumpet on the table, and if the spirits manifest their presence, I will ask them to talk to you through it."

As she finished speaking, she rose and put out all the lights. As the room was suddenly thrown into sudden total darkness, Lola felt a shudder of apprehension.

The blood almost froze in her veins as the medium sat down next to her. She took Mrs. Paestro's right hand with her own left, and then felt the medium's left hand touch her right one.

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She held both Mrs. Paestro's and Mrs. Clark's hands with a tight grip, breathing faster and faster.

The silence of the room was broken by the medium's hollow voice.

"Let us sing the first verse of 'Abide With Me' to bring the proper religious atmosphere into this room."

She started singing lustily, with Mrs. Paestro joining in. All Lola could do was weakly hum the tune. The medium spoke again:

"Oh, great spirit, my own guide, the mighty White Feather, noble chief of a noble tribe, long since in Spirit, come to me and manifest your willingness to aid this lost earthbound creature who seeks you through me. If you be present, signify that presence with one spirit knock on this table."

She stopped talking. The room was still. Lola held her breath.

Suddenly there was a heavy knock in the center of the table. Lola gasped.

The medium spoke again.

"Oh, White Feather, I thank you. By signifying your presence here you bring strength and confidence to me. Now, let me ask you to make the table rise as all three keep our hands on it."

Lola's hands were lifted onto the table, where she rested them beside Mrs. Clark's and Mrs. Paestro's.

Almost immediately the table began to move. To Lola it seemed that it was floating about the room. Still grasping Mrs. Paestro's and the medium's hands, she knew that the ghosts must be making the table rise.

With a jar the table dropped to the floor again. Mrs. Clark again spoke.

"White Feather, who art with us, I ask you if the

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conditions are correct for you to aid me in answering any questions our new convert may ask. Rap twice on the table thou hast just made rise, if thou art ready, otherwise rap but once."

Two loud raps disturbed the quiet of the room.

"Good," said the medium to Lola. "I will now release your hands, and turn on the lights. You can write any questions you want White Feather to answer. I will bring you paper and pencil."

The medium rose, turned on the lights, and left the room. Lola was hardly able to think. She felt that she had been touched by the hands of the dead, that she had visited where man should not transgress, and was in contact with a spirit which knew all.

The medium returned, bringing with her several small pieces of cardboard, two inches by three.

She laid these on the table, asked Lola to select three or four, on each write a single question, and place them face downward on the table so they couldn't be read. While Lola was writing her questions, the medium stepped back to the doorway.

Lola finished writing, put her cardboards together in a single pile, face downward, and then announced nervously that she was ready for the answers. The medium came to her side, asked her to concentrate on the questions, picked up the spirit trumpet from the end of the table on which it rested, and stated:

"I will put out the lights again. When I sit down, please note that the questions are in front of the seeker after knowledge, that the trumpet is also in front of her and that the questions are beyond my reach. Please take my hands again after the lights are off. That insures my not being able to reach either trumpet or questions."

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Mrs. Clark put out the light, sat down at the table again, took Lola's hands as before, and apparently reached for Mrs. Paestro's. All was silent for a moment and then, in the same deep monotone, the medium spoke.

"Oh, Great White Feather, again listen to my prayer. As my hands are held by the friends of this circle, I beg of you to take up the trumpet and answer the questions which have been written."

Lola distinctly felt the trumpet being picked up and moved past her head. A whistling noise, then moaning and groaning came from it. There was silence for a few seconds. Then Mrs. Clark was heard to speak.

"Art thou with us, oh, Spirit to whom I owe all? If so give a sign; one rap on the table will suffice."

Another few seconds of silence, and again there was the same distinctive rap. Then, close to her ear, in a most ungodly voice, certainly not human, Lola heard:

"Bewitched gold is better than no gold at all. What gold you can get I will double. Fear not for your husband, as he will worship you once you have made him wealthy beyond his dreams.

"Your children will all grow up well and strong and become great men and women. There will be a sickness of the eyes of one child, but that won't matter if you believe in me, for I will aid you. I got your husband that position as foreman. I will also see he holds it. Do not doubt my power, which is beyond human understanding.

"Your last question is a hard one to answer, despite the fact I know all things, for we in the spirit world dread to talk of our fellows on this side of the world. However, know that thy dear mother is happy in Spirit and that some day I will bring you a message from her."

With a hiss the voice was gone. The utter stillness of

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the room was not broken. Then, a moan seemed to penetrate the entire room. Rising to a loud shriek the unearthly cry died gradually away. Lola almost fainted. The silence again became for a moment almost unbearable, when it was broken with Mrs. Clark's sepulchral tone announcing, "The spirits have come—and gone—. Therefore let us again sing "Abide With Me."

As the medium's voice died away on the last note, she rose. Moving over to the light switch, she turned on the subdued electric lamp.

As Lola's eyes accustomed themselves to the light, she looked at the table, trumpet and her pile of questions. Nothing seemed disturbed. The spirits had even read her questions in the dark through the cardboard. Surely, it was a wonderful thing, this manifestation of spirits.

"Mrs. Clark," Mrs. Paestro said, "we can't thank you enough for this demonstration. What do we owe you for the messages you brought Mrs. Luis in answer to her questions?"

"The regular church fee, as you know," the medium replied, "is what you care to give. Silver donations are acceptable, but because this is a private reading in my home, there will be no charge."

"Oh, thank you," Lola gushed. "It's just too wonderful of you. But, Mrs. Clark, if you recall, the spirit said he would double the money I brought him. How can that be? What do I have to do?"

"Child, I don't know," the medium replied. "The next time White Feather visits me, I'll ask him, however, and if he tells me, I'll let you know. But, in the meantime say nothing of any of this to your husband, for he may be a disturbing influence. You are doing this out of love for

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your man anyway, but if he doesn't understand, it may lead to quarrels."

Lola and Mrs. Paestro took their leave. Lola could hardly wait to get out of the house to thank her friend.

"It was wonderful," she said. "If Mrs. Clark lets you know just what I have to do to double my money, be sure and tell me at once. You know, George and I have a joint account at the bank, and I can draw some out, replace it before he knows it, and then surprise him with the amount the spirit brings me."

Happily Lola went home, mentally buying every good looking automobile that she saw. She was unmindful of the squalor in the neighborhood.

The afternoon passed so quickly that she hardly knew it was dinner time when George came home. She was her old self again. He was happy to see Lola cheerful and content once more.

"So you've put the spirits out of your mind, have you?" he queried.

He thanked his patron saint. Lola silently blessed and praised the spirits.

* * * *

Three days went by before Mrs. Paestro visited Lola again.

"What has happened?" Lola demanded. "Did Mrs. Clark tell you anything? Quick!"

"Lots of things have happened, dear. Last night at midnight, strange rapping noises awoke Mrs. Clark. She saw White Feather in her room for the first time. She actually saw him. Think of it. I'd have been so nervous I wouldn't know what to do, but Mrs. Clark said she didn't mind.

"Anyway, White Feather sent her a message for you.

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She said that a gypsy dressed in brilliant colors was with the Indian spirit and that both had imparted a secret for you.

"You are to take one of your husband's best handkerchiefs, sew up three ends of it, leaving one end open. Then, take as much money as you want to double out of the bank and bring it to Mrs. Clark in large bills. After you see her, Mrs. Clark will go into a trance, foretell your future, and start the magic charm working which will double your money."

"Wonderful! Let me do it now. I'll get a handkerchief. You stay here while I sew up the three ends. Then we'll go to the bank and to Mrs. Clark."

"I'm sorry, dear," Mrs. Paestro told her, "but I must go home at once and get my work done. I had started to do the dishes when the phone rang. It was Mrs. Clark on the wire and she told me all I've told you. I dropped everything to get here quickly. So good-by, good luck."

Lola really didn't much care if Mrs. Paestro stayed or not. "Good-by and thanks a thousand times. I'll let you know all about what happened tomorrow."

The door had hardly closed on Mrs. Paestro when Lola dashed to the bureau, and sort of hopped, skipped and jumped to her modest sewing basket. Turning in the ends of a handkerchief as she had been told, she sewed it as instructed. Then she put on her hat, took the savings bank book out of the old coffee pot, and was off to the bank.

At the paying window, she drew out two thousand two hundred dollars in two one-thousand-dollar bills and two one-hundred-dollar bills, leaving only a small balance.

She was at Mrs. Clark's in a few minutes. The

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medium was still garbed in the black, smocklike dress she had worn when Lola had first seen her. The medium's greeting was effusive.

"My dear," she said. "It is so wonderful. Think of White Feather coming to me in person and bringing his spirit bride with him. Of course, you know 'bride' is just a name, for in heaven there is no marriage or giving in marriage, but the spirits do pick a certain friend of the opposite sex with whom they always associate.

"Well, this gypsy girl certainly gave me lots of information. Of course, you know all gypsies are brought up to read the future, so it stands to reason that when they pass on to the other world, they are good fortune tellers. You understand, don't you?"

Poor Lola. She nodded her head in understanding and said:

"I brought the handkerchief you wanted, and I sewed it just as Mrs. Paestro told me to. What do I do now?"

"Not so fast. It's all very well to let the spirits double your money, but you'll have to say a prayer or two before. Then we must go get the sanction of White Feather before anything can be done for you."

The medium escorted Lola to the same room in which she'd been a few days ago.

"Tell me, dear," the medium asked, once they were seated, "how much money did you bring?"

Lola told her. Mrs. Clark said that was very nice for a beginning. She then asked Lola for the handkerchief, examined it, and rose.

"Put the money you brought on the table," she said. "I'll get some thread so you can sew the money in the handkerchief."

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Lola placed the money on the table. She was so happy, she could hardly contain herself.

The medium came back, bringing with her some heavy white thread, on a large spool, and a needle.

"First, thread the needle," Mrs. Clark said, "then we'll be ready."

While Lola worked the heavy thread through the eye of the needle, the medium took out the light bulb in the floor lamp and substituted a blue one of a few watts.

The room was shadowy with the light of the darkened bulb; the bluish tint threw everything into ghastly relief.

"We are ready now," the medium said. "Let us ask White Feather if he is present. One rap means yes, you recall, and two means no."

Lola held the handkerchief and money tightly in one hand, the threaded needle in the other. She waited. Silence. Then:

"Oh, great White Feather, are you ready to aid us?"

A loud knock.

"Thank you, my control. Now may I impart my knowledge to the earthbound?"

A loud rap.

"'Tis well." Mrs. Clark turned to Lola. "Fold the money in half. Then fold it again exactly in the center. Now, see if it fits the pocket in the handkerchief. Very well, give me both money and handkerchief. I will place the money in the handkerchief. Let me have the needle and thread. Watch me now sew the money in the handkerchief. No, you sew it. Finish those stitches I have made. Careful, do not sew through the money. Push in that gold corner showing. Good, that's right."

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Mrs. Clark told Lola to take off her waist. This done, she took the needle and thread, and asked Lola for the handkerchief.

"My dear, I will sew this money to your clothes."

She sewed the handkerchief in the center of Lola's vest, and walked directly in front of her.

"On your breast now reposes the earthly funds that you have brought. Touch not the handkerchief nor take off your vest until three suns have set. Touch neither before six o'clock of the third day, and then see what has happened. Have faith and say nothing to any one. Now, let me impart to you your future as imparted to me by the Romany maid, a future somewhat as White Feather first predicted.

"Give me your left hand. That is the fate hand. I really do not need to take it, but the gypsy told me to repeat these facts only as I held it. First, your younger son will have trouble with his eyes. He may be blind for a time, but then the spirits will double or triple your money and thus you will be in position to relieve his suffering. Second, your husband may be angry if you let him know about this. Do not mention it to any one. That is all. Come to me after you open the sewed handkerchief. I will then tell you more about your son's eyes."

Lola was stunned by the prophecy about her son, but cheered by the prospect of the doubled or tripled money. She took her leave graciously, and left the house hoping the time would pass quickly until the two suns had set.

* * * *

Lola went about her daily household duties in a routine manner. She was thinking how she'd have a maid to do her work soon. She was picturing George's astonishment and joy when she poured the money into his lap.

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Lola looked at her son's eyes from time to time; she could see nothing wrong with them, but the spirits must know better than she.

Came the hour of six on the day after the second sun had set. Lola was waiting for the clock to strike. She had carefully removed her dress, sitting in her underwear so she'd waste no time getting at the handkerchief. She had a pair of scissors in her hand. The hour struck!

Feverishly she cut the handkerchief free from her vest. With trembling hands she pulled out the stitches that held the ends together. She shoved her hand in the opening. She pulled out the money. She started to count it. There was no need.

The top bill was a twenty, underneath was a one. The rest was blank paper.

Lola toppled to the floor in a faint.

In a few minutes she revived and rose to her feet. She half walked, half tottered to her bedroom. There, before an image of The Blessed Virgin, she fell in prayer and supplication.

Dazed with the shock, broken mentally, Lola finally took a paper bag from the table, and with a pencil laboriously wrote:

Dearest George:

I have been false to you and my God. I went to a fortune teller who was to double our money. I took some out of the bank. I cannot live to face you and the children, for I've spoiled their lives and yours.

I hope to see you in Heaven.

God bless you.

Your LOLA.

She had hardly finished writing when she heard George's footsteps on the floor below. She ran to the

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window, threw it open, balanced herself for a moment on the edge, closed her eyes, shrieked, "Holy Mother, forgive me!" and jumped.

With the ringing scream piercing his ears, George opened the door of the apartment. Not understanding, he looked about. He saw the note, read it, did not understand all of it, for Lola's tears had made the writing partly indecipherable. He ran to the window and looked out. The crowd below hid the figure crushed on the hard pavement. George dashed to the street, pushed men and women out of his way, bent over the pathetic broken heap, clasped her to his arms, murmuring:

"My Lola—my Lola—come back to me. Speak, for God's sake, speak!"

A blue uniformed officer shoved his way through the throng, took in the scene, waved the crowd back, and ordered:

"Phone for an ambulance."

Lifting the grief-stricken husband, he started to lead him away as another policeman arrived.

"Suicide," said the first officer. "Phone the station."

The next few hours passed like a horrible dream. George showed the note, he knew no more. Father Kelley came to the house to bring what comfort he could. Newspaper headlines screamed:

SEER'S PREDICTION CAUSES GIRL MOTHER'S SUICIDE

Detectives traced the numbers of the thousand-dollar bills. A dead trail. The medium had vanished, and with her Mrs. Paestro, an accomplice.

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Dante's Inferno, Canto XX is devoted entirely to that part of Hades which is occupied exclusively by sooth-sayers, fortune tellers and seers. Reserve another cell there for Mrs. "Clark" or whatever her name may be now.

* * * *

Immediately following the tragic end of this girl-mother whose belief in spirit mediums cut short her useful life as mother and wife, a representative of the Press Bureau started an investigation beyond that of the police and city officials. Working independent of the authorities, but with their co-operation, starting from the cold, stark coroner's report he ferreted out the actual methods used by Mrs. Clark.

To start with, Mrs. Clark was not a Spiritualist, nor did she belong to any of the ultra-creeds which are sincere believers in the possibility to the dead coming back to earth. True Spiritualism is not to be confused with the fake medium's "religion."

Spiritualism is a religion that was born in 1848 at Hydesville, Wayne County, New York, when Kate and Margaret Fox (known as the Fox sisters), originated "spirit rapping." The fame of these girls spread all over the world, and scientists came thousands of miles to investigate the "spirit phenomena." The cult spread like wildfire, but in 1888 received a great set-back when Kate Fox confessed that the rappings came from the cracking of her big toe.

The actual identity of Mrs. Clark is still unknown to the police, but they found she had been operating under an alias.

Regardless of who she is, that harpy of old, that fabu-

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lous monster with the face and form of a woman, but the soul and mind of a vulture, was a saint compared to her.

Here is the explanation of how this modern ogre, this she-demon in human shape, entrapped this young woman, and by preying on her superstitious mind, stripped her of her religion, robbed her of her reason, stole her hard-earned dollars, and by raising false hopes with trickery, took away her desire to live.

Mrs. Paestro was obviously planted in the neighborhood by the soothsayer. These seers use 'steerers' much as a carnival uses 'shills,' the idea of both being to bring trade. Gambling houses use them too.

The job of the steerer in this case was to form an acquaintance with those in the neighborhood, find out who had some money in the bank, and, regardless of the circumstances, tempt them with tales of what the spirits had done for others, and what they would do for them.

Investigation in the block where Lola lived revealed the fact that Mrs. Paestro had ensnared three other women in the trap of the medium. At least, these three women admitted having taken losses in their experiences with Mrs. Clark. How many others suffered, but from fear of their husbands' or neighbors' criticism would not admit it, no one knows.

The medium, to impress Lola, first used the simplest of tricks, effects that were done thirty years ago. The rapping on the table was child's play, but made a weighty impression on the victim's mind.

There are many ways of doing this, but from evidence left behind, Mrs. Clark used the easiest. Lola, holding one of the medium's hands, thought Mrs.

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Paestro was holding the other, but in the dark, Mrs. Paestro released Mrs. Clark's hand, and the alleged medium, using a hollow heel and hammer arrangement with a string running up her leg attached to a garter, with her free hand simply pulled on the string and produced the raps. (Note illustration on page 156.)

It is almost impossible, in a darkened room, to tell from which direction sound comes, particularly when the victim is keyed up. The victim really believes the raps came from the center of the table, as the medium says. Beware of mediums who produce raps. There are more than twenty ways to do the trick, and each method is different.

The table rising effect is another old stunt. Fake mediums use both table rapping and table lifting to impress their "customers." It is just as easy to make a table rise as it is to produce raps. By concealing a knife in the sleeve of his coat, if the medium is a man, or in the sleeves of her blouse, if a woman, it can be done. (See illustration on page 155.)

They use either a kitchen table which does not weigh more than a few pounds, or a card table, which is exceptionally light. They slide the knife under the protruding edge of the table, place the tips of their fingers on the table exactly as shown in the drawing, maneuver the knife under the edge, and lift up the arms.

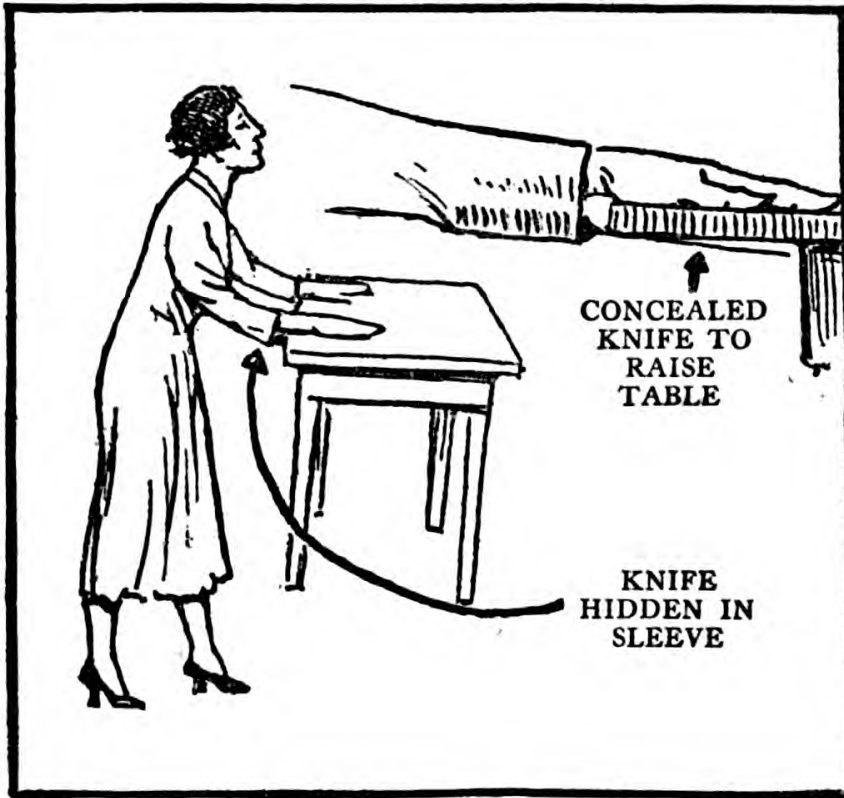
It can be done with a fork, as well as a knife, provided the prongs point upwards.

Whether Mrs. Clark fooled Lola with the knife trick, we do not know. She may have had a small nail driven in the table and by hooking her wedding ring underneath it, worked the trick. There are almost as many ways to make a table rise as there are to produce raps.

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Coming now to the spirit trumpet performance. Picture a metal cone about four feet long. It is painted darkest black. On the mouthpiece end, the one the "spirits" use when they talk, is a wooden tip, turned to fit tightly over the metal. (See the illustration on page 156.)

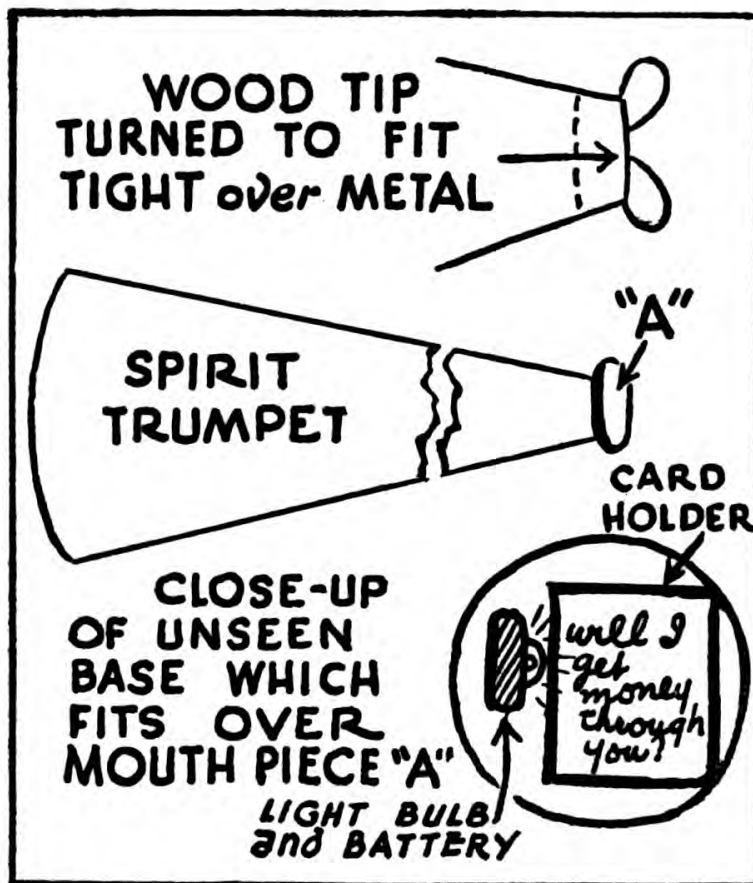
Concealed about the medium's person is a round base



of wood which fits very snugly into the wooden mouthpiece, like a cork into a bottle. When the lights are put out by the medium, she reaches the questions, which are face downward on the table, by using a "divining rod," a contraption of collapsible tubing which, when opened, may be ten feet in length.

On the end of this divining, or "reaching rod," as it is

ON THEIR HEELS, COMES DEATH!



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called by some mediums, is a pair of tweezers worked by wires running down the shaft of the rod. The medium picks the questions up with this rod.

In Lola's case it was not necessary for the medium to use a reaching rod, because Mrs. Paestro, her accomplice, working in the dark, could hand the questions to her. She could also pass her the trumpet. If you recall, Lola held one hand of each of the other women. One hand free is all that a medium needs. If Mrs. Paestro hadn't been an accomplice, by trickery Mrs. Clark could have gotten one hand free, while Lola believed that she still held both. But that's another story.

When Mrs. Clark received the questions from Mrs. Paestro, in the dark, she slipped one of them into the little wooden contrivance, the base. Refer to the drawing on page 156 and note the battery and a small flash-light.

The medium, after the card was in the base, and the base was fastened tightly into the end of the trumpet, turned on the light in the base, holding her hand over the end to keep the light from escaping until she bent over and looked down at the illuminated card.

In Lola's case, Mrs. Clark did this four times to get each question. That was when she was stalling for time with her "talks to the spirits."

She then brought the trumpet up to the top of the table again, took off and concealed the base, placed the mouthpiece to her lips, and the other end near the ear of the victim, and in a falsetto voice answered the questions. The long metal cone of the trumpet transformed the falsetto voice into a most ghostly one.

Harry Houdini, greatest 'ghost-breaker' the world has

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ever known, once surreptitiously put powdered lamp black on the mouthpiece of the trumpet. Imagine the laughs provoked when the lights were turned on and the medium's mouth was black!

These tricks that cost Lola her life are in daily practice, and while they do not always bring death to the victim, do cause suffering, poverty and misery.

The sewing of money into a handkerchief before a victim's eyes is an old gypsy trick. It is known as the 'switch.' (Note the illustration on page 159.) As the medium seemingly places the money in the handkerchief she simply changes the bills that the victim has brought, for the blank paper wrapped in a few genuine bills.

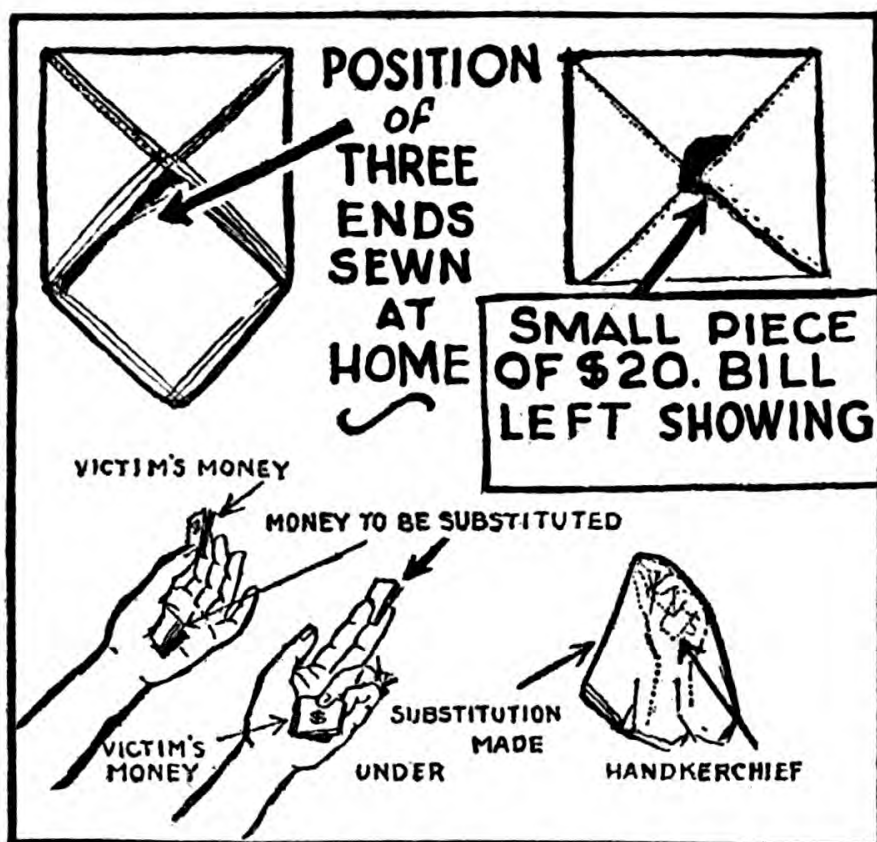
If you recall, in Lola's case, the medium left the room for a few minutes. That was to give her a chance to get paper and bills to form a package the same size as that of Lola's money. A quick change that is absolutely undetectable takes place, the medium sews the first few stitches so as to conceal the blank paper which she placed in the pocket already sewed by the dupe. Part of a gold bill is left out.

This was just an added touch to convince the victim that the money was in the handkerchief.

The sewing of money in Lola's vest is to prevent her from feeling the roll and detecting the difference, if any, and to further prove that the money is in her possession. Obviously the setting of the 'two suns' is essential to give the medium a chance to get the thousand dollar bills changed before the hue and cry of the police is heard, and to let her make her getaway.

The story about Lola's child's eyes was to distract, partially, her mind from the money. There was nothing the

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THE GYPSY "MONEY SWITCH"

The most famous of all fortune tellers' tricks is that of the "handkerchief switch." Note carefully the three moves made by the gypsies indicated directly above. The victim's money is exchanged by moving the second and third fingers under cover of a handkerchief down to the palm of the hands. As though in one move, the fourth and fifth fingers bring the amount to be substituted back into the position formerly occupied by the victim's money. In many cases a small piece of a gold back bill is left showing to convince the victim "all is fair."

matter with the youngster's eyes. It was just another piece of vicious ingenuity. The blue light that Mrs. Clark used was for the purpose of throwing a ghastly shadow over the room, to awaken the superstitious side of the victim.

CHAPTER VII

HOW TO BECOME A SPIRIT MEDIUM

BEFORE the following letter and revelations were written, considerable thought was given to the subject, and many visits made in New York and vicinity to so-called 'spirit mediums.' It is not the author's intention in this book to do harm to any one, but merely to aid the credulous and superstitious in saving their health and money. And it is his belief that the following letter and answer will do so.

The letter referred to came from Indiana from a woman in Indiana who had lost her only son. Read it:

Nov. 9, 1931.

Since the death of my boy two years ago I have been looking for solace among spirit mediums. I was born in the — faith, but did not find in it any aid at the time of my boy's death. Accordingly I have been going regularly to spirit mediums, some of whom call themselves spiritual mediums. None of them have done me any good, but all have taken my money.

Can you tell me how these people "set up in the business," for there is no other word or term for it. They pose as ministers and yet have no education. Few speak grammatical English. None are sincere or genuine. Yet thousands of people flock to them regularly.

Almost all have certificates ordaining them ministers. How are these obtained? Can anyone be a spirit or spiritual medium by paying certain fixed fees? How does one protect oneself against these frauds, except by staying away from them?

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Please write me a detailed account of this business of being a medium. I will pay anything in reason to relieve my mind on the subject.

MRS. SARAH R. M——.

Following is the reply the author sent in his official capacity as chairman of the Press Bureau of Parent Assembly No. 1, Society of American Magicians.

Nov. 14, 1931.

Dear Madam:

Your letter is only one of many which ask approximately the same questions. Therefore I am writing to you in detail and making carbon copies which I will send to the other inquirers. There is no charge for the service. As Chairman of the Press Bureau of the Parent Assembly No. 1, of the Society of American Magicians it is my duty to give you this information without remuneration from you, for we are trying to render a community service.

To start with, the first move of one who wants to be a 'spirit medium' is to become friendly with a medium who is already accepted by some organized body.

It is easy for a medium to be a member of an organized body as pointed out below, so it is equally easy for the prospective medium to meet a 'recognized' one. Lessons in how to be a medium are given by almost all mediums. These lessons are called 'development sittings.' They teach how to conduct a meeting and reveal to the 'ambitious novitiate' lessons on how to fleece the public, if one's taste runs to fraud.

The cost of becoming a 'recognized medium' is very modest. One writes to The National Spiritualistic Alliance of Lake Pleasant, Mass., one of the foremost organizations and makes application for membership. Miss Shirley Whicher is (or was) secretary. Anyone sending one dollar to the association becomes an 'Individual Member,' and for two dollars this association sends a 'medium' or 'healer's' certificate. If one desires to start a church

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there is a charge of five dollars for the 'Charter,' but ten members are necessary to obtain the 'Church Charter.'

It is a good place here to point out that not all spiritualists are grafters or insincere. It is not the sincere and genuine mediums that are being referred to here, only the grafters.

The new medium, having learned the ropes, is now an applicant for an 'Assistant Minister Certificate.' A local 'church board' examines the applicant and after 'demonstrating' message bringing abilities, he (or she) is recommended to church headquarters. The certificate received, the 'Assistant Minister' holds services as a helper to a full 'minister.'

The next step on the road of the applicant is to apply for a "Minister's Certificate." This is a little harder to get than the assistant's, for ministers are entitled to perform marriage ceremonies, officiate at funerals, and generally perform all the duties of a genuine minister. However, it is not so difficult, despite any lack of education of the applicant.

A new application blank is filled in by the duly ordained 'assistant minister,' and sent to National Headquarters. A certified 'reverend' then visits the church where the applicant is giving 'readings' and watches him 'work.' If the 'reverend' is satisfied, and believes that the applicant will make a good 'minister,' fitting ceremonies are publicly held and the assistant is sworn in as a full 'minister.'

The questions asked prior to granting the full minister's certificate are: age, sex, nationality, how long interested in spiritualism, will the applicant always be a spiritualist, at all time conduct himself honorably and never bring disgrace to the name of minister.

Minister's certificates are never issued, according to a statement of a leading spiritualist, to anyone ever convicted of any crime or fraud. However, many ask, as you did:

"Ministers of every other creed must have years of training and study at a recognized institute. Why do spiritualists accept any uneducated and untrained prospects who say they feel the

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'call'? And how do they know the applicant has never been convicted of a crime?"

In a pamphlet sold to the "initiated," full instructions on how to fleece the public are given. This booklet is printed as an expose of spiritualism and is sold as such (possibly to avoid postal authorities preventing its distribution), but in it is given exact instructions how to avoid the police, how to advertise for 'clients,' how to have believers sign a 'receipt' which makes the 'minister' immune from arrest as a fortune teller, how to work 'donation racket,' etc., etc.

The 'donation racket' is used where fees can not be collected. One medium uses it in this fashion. Before giving a reading, in order to avoid the fortune telling law, he states "I charge you nothing for the reading and advice I will give you. To take care of my time, I request you to simply make a donation to the church." The medium forgets to tell the sitter that he is in most cases the "church."

In the room where mediums hold forth one often finds a large glazed cardboard statement of the 'Declaration of the Principles of the National Spiritualist Association.' It is most impressive and costs but 50 cents.

In the booklet on how mediums work, details are given about various practices of fraudulent spiritualists. The author of the booklet, a man just recently convicted and fined \$100, gives complete instructions on how to read messages written by believers. While the method he gives differs from ones explained by me in many articles, the same underlying principle is used, that of substituting blank paper for the paper on which the message is written.

Therefore, let me tell you to never write anything on paper in a medium's meeting. No matter how innocent the moves of the medium may be, trickery is being used to find out your question. And the answer you get is just so much nonsense.

The medium's instruction book, for one can call it nothing else, tells how to give "psychological readings" and states "it all depends on the medium's ability to handle the sitter and to re-

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peat a stock speil." The word speil to the initiated means 'talk.' The jargon of the author of the booklet is the jargon of the show business.

According to the writer of the booklet, twelve divisions cover everything in the life of the average individual. Time, personal magnetism, investments, partnerships, best friends, obstacles, sickness to look out for, enemies, marriages, money conditions, change in affairs (trips), surprises and warnings are included in the things the fake medium must cover in his 'speil.'

The details change according to the age and sex of the dupe. If the medium has a chance before the meeting opens to search the pockets of overcoats, etc., left in an outside room, he may do so, thus getting information that he later states the spirits told him. Not all mediums do this, but some do, and have. Trickery based on deception gives the nervy medium a chance to use 'stock speils' to impress the credulous. No matter how uneducated one may be, if he has a good memory he can learn by rote the proper things to say.

Unbelievable as it may be, Harry Houdini had in his possessions at his death hundreds of 'certificates of Ordination' issued to uneducated, ignorant people who become 'ministers' almost for the asking. Some of these certificates were issued by the National Spiritualistic Alliance and others by the National Spiritualistic Association of Washington, D.C. One of the latter organization's certificates is reproduced herewith on page 165.

In company with friends (and strangers taken along as witnesses), I have gone to several spiritual mediums in New York and vicinity to check up stories I have been told. As all the experiences have been practically the same at each meeting, I will relate exactly what happened on one night only (September 23, 1931) when we visited a 'reading medium' on 58th Street, New York.

Those in the party were Bob, Margaret, Bessie, Edna, Ernest and myself. We were not asked for money but a 'donation' of a 'silver offering' of fifty cents was paid. The assistant to the medium collected from those in the room, about 20 people, some articles

This photographic reproduction is of one of the thousands of the certificates of ordination in Harry Houdini's collection. It is typical. You, too, can get one of these certificates if you carefully follow the directions in this chapter, "How To Become A Medium."

Certificate of Ordination

This is to Certify, THAT—
was, on the 11 day of February, 1912, at the First Spiritualists'
Temple Society in the City of Chicago (SEE NOT NAME OF SOCIETY)
County of Cook State of Illinois,
regularly ordained as a Minister of the Gospel of
Spiritualism by the State Association of Illinois
in accordance with the Laws and Services of Ordination of the National Spiritualists'
Association of the United States of America, a religious body, incorporated in the District
of Columbia, of which body, said State Association of Illinois
is a subordinate State Organization;

And that the said *Ohio State Association* is authorized to perform all the Rites and Ceremonies, including Marriage, pertaining to the Religion of Spiritualism, and that he acts as such Minister are entitled to full Faith and Credit: subject, however, to the laws of the various states governing the performance of the marriage ceremony.

AS WITNESS the seal of the said _____ Association of _____
 _____ State _____
 a body corporate, and the signature of the President thereof, attested by the Secretary,
 this _____ day of _____ in the year nineteen hundred and _____

24	August.	<u>J. A. Herrick</u>	<u>President</u>
15	" "	<u>Carl A. Sollenberger</u>	<u>Secretary</u>
22	" "		

J. E. Dwyer



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'the personal magnetism of which will bring vibrations that will aid the spirits in guiding the medium in the answers,' she said.

Here is what happened: after some religious hymns were played on a loud and noisy phonograph.

The medium picked up Bob's pencil. He sensed that Bob was in trouble about a 'Building condition, a real estate deal.' He gave ten minutes' advice on how to handle the situation. Bob is in the advertising business and never was connected with any real estate firm or deal.

Margaret gave her compact. From this the medium received an impression from the spirits that she had been in a lot of trouble and gone through much unhappiness in the last two years. He gave advice on how to combat her difficulties. Margaret had been married for little more than two years, and had spent the happiest days of her life in that time.

From Bessie's keys the medium received the impression she owned an automobile. He also declared the spirits told him she was headstrong. Bessie's keys contained one marked 'Ford.' He saw the car name. Obviously she had a car. She is the best natured woman imaginable, yet the spirits told him she was headstrong, he said.

Edna's cigarette case gave the medium, through the spirits, the idea that Edna was going to be married shortly. He gave advice on that 'condition.' He explained the man of her choice would ask her to wed him soon. Edna has been married more than 15 years.

From Ernest's fountain pen the medium saw a "condition of uniforms. Men marching." He also received an impression of "some one in spirit who loves you." Ernest hasn't lost anyone in his family. Yet look at the psychology of the medium. Almost everyone has lost some dear and near one. He just picked the wrong one to deliver the message "from the one in spirit."

I have written these statements of the medium exactly as he gave them, and have gone to this length merely to impress on you the stupidity of the statements of the average medium.

Out of a lots of ramblings about "organisms and psychic im-

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pressions of spirit conditions" any medium may make some statement that, while applied generally, hits most of us many times. "Lucky statements," so impress some dupes that they believe the faker really has some supernatural power. Out of our party, not one statement was correct, yet one woman present, whom the medium told the spirits said her mother would die soon, broke into hysterical tears.

There is no question but that many mediums are sincere and believe themselves gifted with genuine psychic powers. The writer as an associate member of the American Society for Psychical Research reads the journal of that society, "Psychic Research," carefully.

In this there appear regularly cases that are reported of genuine phenomena, yet these reported cases are in such minority as compared with the hundreds of thousands of "spirit messages" that before you accept as genuine any statements of any medium it is wise to check up on the medium's standing with approved psychic research investigators.

* * * *

In releasing the above letter to the mother in Indiana for publication it is the sincere hope of the writer that making public the method of becoming a 'minister' will cause all Spiritualist Associations to 'clean house' and stop the frauds being perpetrated in the name of religion, and thus protect the sincere mediums who never tell fortunes, sell oil stocks or predict the future.

In closing this chapter, as further proof that "gross fraud" is prevalent among spirit mediums I want to reproduce here (in part) a letter to Harry Houdini from the late Dr. A. M. Wilson of Kansas City, Editor and Publisher of The Sphinx for more than a score of years. The Sphinx, privately circulated magazine for magicians and official organ of the Society of American Magicians,

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in Dr. Wilson's regime ran story after story exposing frauds of mediums, and today under the editorship of John Mulholland, refuses all advertising of any apparatus that may be used by fake spirit mediums. The letter:—

1007 Main St.,
Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Houdini:

For almost 61 years I have been witnessing and investigating Spiritualism as propagated by mediums through their so-called communications with the dead. Up to this time, I have never met a medium, celebrated or obscure, who was not a gross fraud, nor seen a manifestation that was not trickery and that could not be duplicated by any expert magician.

The thing that first aroused my suspicions and disbeliefs and started me thinking and investigating was why could not the dear departed communicate direct with their relatives and friends? Why talk, rap, write or materialize through a medium, the majority of whom are ignorant men and women, although shrewd and cunning?

I have never met a medium who was not a fraud or seen a materialization of any kind that was not fraudulent.

(signed) A. M. WILSON, M.D.

CHAPTER VIII

FLICKER QUEEN FRAUD

TINGA-LING-TING. The telephone was ringing, but instead of the usual harsh notes of alarm, the softest of peals, gently calling, filled the room.

Miss X, the pride of Hollywood, princess of the films, rubbed her eyes, stirred half awake, rang for Celeste, her French maid, pouted prettily, flounced deeper under the flimsy covers and commanded:

"I don't care *who* it is. I won't come to the phone."

Celeste, trained to the impetuous ways of the film star, asked,

"Even if it's the studio, Mam'selle?"

"No one, I said. Hurry up and shut the darn thing off."

Celeste picked up the French phone hidden behind an adorable doll dressed as "Fifi," which looked exactly like Miss X had looked in that part in "Waif of the World," the talkie which had first brought her fame.

"'Allo. Yes. No, she can not be disturbed. No. Who? Messtaire Ali? Oui. Wait. I do not know."

She hardly had chance to turn before Miss X, a dashing, alluring bit of femininity in filmy *robe de nuit* direct from the Boulevard des Artistes of Paris roughly snatched the phone from her hand.

"Stupid," she thundered. "It is the fortune teller."

"But, mam'selle said——"

"I didn't mean *him*!"

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"Hello," purred the star sweetly into the phone. "Oh, yes, of course. Celeste has no brains. I'm never out to you. Really? Certainly, I've a new slate, I'll bring that. Yes? That is just wonderful. I'll try. I'm due on location at ten this morning. Yes, I know it's nine now. Oh, bother the location. I'll be with you in less than an hour. Bye!"

Turning to Celeste through whose brain was running thoughts not so complimentary to the sweetheart of the world, the pampered pet ordered:

"Run my bath. Not too warm. Use those new violet bath salts. Hurry, hurry. Mula Ali has some special news for me."

As Celeste moved to obey, Miss X threw off her only covering, moved to a full length mirror and admired herself. She was beautifully formed, and she knew it. As she pirouetted in front of the mirror, she thought of what to tell R——, the famous director brought from Germany just to direct her in her new picture, "Sweetheart of the Army." This director was unlike those she had in the past. This man meant business. When he said "Ten" he meant ten, and that was the time of the call this morning. There was no pouting and vamping with him. Mentally she called him "The Beast."

She couldn't plead illness. R—— was too smart for that. She couldn't pretend to have misunderstood the time. Oh, what could she tell him. She couldn't stay away from the soothsayer. Oh, what could she do. Celeste interrupted her thoughts by announcing that the tub was ready, so giving up wondering Miss X wandered into her bath room. What a room. Inverted hidden lights. Huge mirrors from floor to ceiling on every hand. Sunken in marble below the floor level, in the center of the room, was a bath that put to shame the most luxurious

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creation of the *Romanus* sovereign after which it had been modeled. Concealed showers. Three inch thick rugs. What's the use of describing it? It was splendor itself.

Celeste handed the star the prerequisites of the bath and was about to leave the room when inspiration hit the favorite of the flickers.

"Dear," she cooed. "Phone Mr. R—— at the studio. Say that my car hit another and that I'm being detained until police straighten everything out."

Whoever wrote "Singing in the Bath Tub" certainly must have first heard Miss X in her bath, for she warbled and shouted bits of everything she'd ever heard. She was certainly in good mood. Her ablutions finished she ran back to her dressing room, with the aid of Celeste dressed happily, called for her car and chauffeur, picked up a new slate she'd bought only yesterday, and soon was en route to the seer. If the drivers for Hollywood stars told all they knew, meteors wouldn't fall quicker than the human satellites.

Arriving at the fortune teller's, Miss X alighted from her car, noted the dignified sign that announced:

MULA ALI
OCCULTIST—CONSULTANT
MYSTIC SLATE WRITING

She rang the bell and was ushered in by a dusky Negro gaudily attired in a red sash and loosely wound turban. As he salaamed before Miss X he pulled back a set of heavy curtains made of shining black and silver brocade, and invited her to enter a large room. Soft tinkling, like temple bells from the hills of the Afghan country, greeted her as she stepped across the threshold.

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No matter how often Miss X, accustomed as she was to the bizarre, saw this room she never was quite able to overcome a mysterious fear of the unknown. On the left of the room was the huge, strange, and grotesque figure of a half-man, half-beast. With out-stretched arms it held aloft a metal circle on which were engraved the signs of the Zodiac.

Overhead the ceiling of brightly pigmented plaster was covered with geometric designs. On the small table near the window were two burners of incense. Drifting smoke carried the odd, exotic odor of burning spices. Directly opposite the table was a glass vial from which drops of perfume fell intermittently.

The walls were hand-painted. There were huge planets surrounded with small stars; animals, and queer shapes designating the twelve lunar months; nudes of men and women, fantastic and unconventional.

Miss X took her accustomed seat at one of the two chairs at the table, and was hardly seated when Mula Ali entered. The soothsayer, who was known to all Hollywood as a student of the Yogi mysteries, explained his early morning phone call.

"Miss X, the Jinni of Personal Opulence came to me last night with a special message that wealth was in the offing for some one of my favored clients. I have no idea just what he had in mind. All that he told me was that he would bring word himself this morning to any believer in the Occult Omnipresent I selected. That is why I told you to bring your own slate, for we shall have a spirit writing test."

He looked at Miss X with an air of humility and piety, though his dark eyes seemed to pierce her very brain. His hawk-like, jutting jaw set off thin lips that seemed

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to have a perpetual sneer, and to any but a fascinated, blind woman he would have seemed sinister. Despite the attitude of humbleness, an invisible, evil witchery seemed to surround him.

When Ali first came to Hollywood he had announced that he was of the tribe of the Afghan Benneli, fighting warriors of the East, but that he was not a warrior, for he came of a family long known as mighty witch doctors, and that by tribal law, he must always be one. His dark skin and black hair attracted to his doors the feminine stars of the city of films, and the miraculous things he did in the name of the eastern magi gods spread his fame throughout all California.

"Miss X," the soothsayer continued, "the slate that you have brought me is new, not so? No hands, human or otherwise, have ever written upon it, correct? Good! It seems that this message today must be delivered under regular test conditions. By that I mean you must lay the slate under the table with a piece of chalk resting on it, clasp both of my hands, and then permit me to summon the slaves of Jinni to play upon the arlotti, the reed of my native land, that no one in your country had ever heard played until I brought it hence."

No matter how often Miss X came to Mula Ali, she could never suppress a shiver of apprehension.

She took the slate she had brought, and placed it on the floor with the chalk between the feet of the soothsayer and herself, exactly as she had been directed. She then straightened up and laid both her hands on the table, palms up. Ali struck a nearby bell, and two girls entered by a door directly across the room from their master .

They seemed to be the brown-skinned nautch dancer-type from Hind and their large brown eyes, semi-

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Semitic in shape, were almost covered with long lids and lashes that were kohled with Oriental seductiveness. In one hand of each was a long reed. Their entrance to the room was noiseless, for they were in their bare feet, with toes hennaed and colored. Of clothes, there were few. A glittering beaded shield over each breast, a loin cloth of scarlet fabric was all they wore, except from ankle to knee, and from wrist to elbow, bracelets of hand-hammered gold supported stones of emerald, ruby and sapphire hues. And suspended over the stomach of each was a curved snake of jade.

Much as a muezzin calls the faithful to prayer, Mula Ali started to chant:

"Allah, il Allah. The Jinni of Gold has spoken to me. As I place my hands thus on the palms of this girl of the Western World, let my handmaidens begin to play the music of the East, and please send thou thy servant with his word."

As Ali stopped talking, the girls raised their reeds to their lips and started playing. Weird barbaric strains poured forth. Miss X shuddered. Her grasp bit deeper and deeper into Ali's fingers as they sat with hands clasped in the fashion of an Oriental seer and his client.

Ali muttered in his native language swaying back and forth in his chair. Suddenly with a cry, he turned to the players, and commanded:

"Get you gone. There is no place for you in my presence."

When they had left the room, Ali unclasped Miss X's firm grip, told her to pick up the slate and see if the Jinni had brought a message.

Miss X bent to the floor, picked up the slate, and lo! where a few minutes before there had been nothing

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but a surface of bare silicate, now, in shaky, but bold and sprawling letters, there appeared:

WEALTH IS IN RANGOON MINING

A special message had come from the gods for her! But what did it mean? She could not tell. Turning to Ali she asked:

"Do you understand this?"

He hesitated. "I do and I don't," he replied finally. "I believe it better, however, to ask for further instructions."

He picked up the slate, studied the message, and suggested to his client that she keep her eyes on it a second while he left the room for a drink of water.

Miss X sat motionless at the table awaiting the return of the seer. Her vivid imagination pictured the sorcery of the Orient, where great dacoits came to her with their huge hairy arms full of jewels and gold. She had visions of marvelous adventures in which she was spending with prodigal abandon.

The rustle of Ali's flowing garments disturbed her thoughts. She looked at him, noted that he had donned the turban that signified that he had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and was wearing a burnoose of fine broadcloth instead of the flowing robes he wore when he first greeted her.

"My pupil," he commenced, "I am ready to ask Allah's blessing on this which we are about to do. Since the great Jinni of Opulence wrote on the slate which you brought to him a message that is vague to us, and we can not ask him more particulars today as he has gone back to

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his rest in the clouds beyond the horizon, we must seek information elsewhere.

"Therefore, when Allah grants us permission to proceed we will summon again our musicians of the East, and while they play to the great Hashim, ruler of the Spirits who govern the actions of mankind, we will ask him to send us a message which explains exactly what the Jinni meant when he wrote, 'Wealth is in Rangoon mining.'

"Let us proceed. Allah, most powerful, in whose hands are the destinies of the world, hear my prayer. The voice of India calls to you from America, asking that you send spirits to aid us.

"We acknowledge that we mortals are but as dirt under thy feet. Therefore, in this spirit of humility, we come to you asking that you send those hidden forces to our assistance."

He paused for breath, rang for the musicians, and when they started playing, picked up the slate on which was written on one side the cryptic message. The other was blank. He held the slate on a level with Miss X's eyes, moaned, shuddered, and then was still.

He sat motionless, hands and head fixed as though in death. The fire of life seemed gone, but his eyes showed a strange power.

Miss X's pulse raced, her breath came faster. Her face lost color until she, too, was the color of death. Her eyes never left Ali's. It was a terrible strain. She felt no relief even when Ali finally laid down the slate, motioned the musicians away, rolled up his sleeves, carelessly showed his hands were empty and said:

"It is over, Miss X. The spirits have come and brought us a message. Let us read it together.

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"'RANGOON MINING IS SOLD BY CERTAIN STOCKBROKERS'

"Ah, I perceive. You are supposed to buy some of this stock. Very good. I will investigate it for you and find out which brokers are selling it. Then we will have another meeting and I will get further instructions for you."

Ali rose, bowed to Miss X, and escorted her to the door. She signed to her driver to bring her car, and ordered him to drive to the "lot" where her company was on location. Her mind was whirling, her thoughts on the mine in which she would make so much money.

It was eleven-fifteen by the clock in her car when she drove up to the tented city. Impetuously she strode to her dressing tent, followed by her chauffeur who carried her "make-up" materials in a gorgeous lizard-covered case. Celeste met her at the entrance, told the driver to inform R—— that the star had arrived, and started to help her mistress to undress.

"*Mam'selle*," Celeste said, "that man, R——, is horrible. He have raved and stormed about here that you are no good actress and that when your contract was up he will no more have you about. *Oui, mam'selle*, the insults, the threats. Oh, it is horrible, quite horrible."

Suddenly a loud voice broke in:

"Is that person not ready yet? Let me see her."

R—— stamped into the tent.

The fact that Miss X was in a thin dressing gown, and at the top could be seen the delicate lingerie worn by this darling of the screen, meant nothing to him, for he was the artist director, not a man when he was on location.

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"Miss," he stated, shaking a finger at Miss X, "you have this whole company kept idle again for one hour and one-half of one. There are two hundred people who nothing do while you lie to me your car is broken, and what money that it costs this company. That means nothing to you. I would not have you work for me again, I will——"

Miss X broke in, with her nerves tingling yet from her experience with the fortune teller:

"Get out of here," she screamed. "How dare you intrude when I am not dressed? How dare you say I lied about my car being broken? How dare you?"

With flashing eyes the temperamental star battled the prosaic German whose idea of the motion picture business was to produce masterpieces at a reasonable figure. Hotter and hotter words passed between them, each one hurling vituperation and abuse at each other shamefully, the director knowing he was right, and the star knowing she was wrong, but taking the attitude that a "Queen" can do no wrong.

It finally ended. R—— left the tent in a blind rage and Miss X followed shortly afterward in just as bad a temper. Work on the picture started, but neither star nor director was in humor to do justice to the work. When luncheon was finally served Miss X ate in her tent and R—— refused to eat at all. The morale of the entire company suffered, but when a girl who once thought fifteen dollars was a lot of money suddenly finds four thousand dollars a week in her envelope, her judgment as well as her ego is warped.

Work on the picture continued after the noon bit, but a certain spark was lacking. When the sun went down at four o'clock R—— drove to Hollywood to explain to

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the president of the company what was happening, while Miss X went home to sulk and build castles in the air out of the Rangoon mine millions. First, she thought, she would buy the company, then discharge its president, and then—her dainty lips curled—she would fire R——.

Miss X's humor when she arrived back at her Beverly Hills estate was not one with which to tamper. She raged at Celeste, told her secretary that she was "through," when that most efficient young lady told her to "Keep away from that fortune teller before he takes you like Grant took Richmond," discharged her famous French chef, who was also Celeste's beau, and generally upset her household as no one can except a spoiled movie queen.

M——, her leading man in many of her successes, came, by appointment, for supper, but Miss X wouldn't even see him. The phone rang several times, but Celeste each time stated "*Mam'selle* is not at home." Miss X walked the floor, a lioness tramping back and forth in her rage.

"Why, oh, why doesn't Ali call?" she kept muttering to herself.

Celeste, half torn between loyalty to the star, and anger because of the unjust dismissal of her sweetheart, the chef, cursed the fortune teller.

"Why does *mam'selle*, with all her money, want more?" she thought. "She has all she can use. I could understand her if she went to a fortune teller about her lover, but money, poof!"

The soft tinkle of the boudoir phone. Celeste dashed to answer it.

"*Oui, oui*," she almost shouted, "*Mam'selle* awaits."

Miss X snatched the phone.

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"Yes—yes?" she demanded. "What did you learn? Yes? That's great. Why do you want to see me tonight? Oh, I see. You want me to consult the slates again before I buy that stock. Is it necessary? Oh, surely, I'll be right over. . . ."

"My hat, Celeste, and the car. Quickly! Wait a minute! Tell Henri not to leave. I think he is a wonderful chef. Tell him his salary is fifty dollars a month more. Run along now and don't wait up for me. I'm not so bad now, am I?"

The run from Miss X's miniature mansion in Beverly Hills to the salon on Hollywood Boulevard which housed the seer of the Orient should have taken fifteen minutes. Miss X made it in eight.

Mula Ali greeted her in his usual calm manner, bowed low, took her slate, and beckoned her to a lounge. She had always sat at the table, but this time it seemed the seer wished her to sit beside him. There was an odor of smoldering incense about him.

"My friend," he started, "I have all the particulars of where you may buy the stock of Rangoon Mining, Ltd. It is sold in San Francisco by a very reputable firm. Its price is in English pounds. The broker who is selling it is very certain that there is some fast upward move coming in it, for he will not sell over two thousand shares, or, with his commissions, about ten thousand dollars' worth in American money.

"I do not want you even to attempt to buy any until we subject the stock to two more tests. The first is known as the 'Test of Shaitan of the Damned,' rightly called after the one you call the Devil in Hell. In our language, Shaitan is what you call Satan.

"The second test is known in our land as 'The Test

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of High Priests of the Wizards.' No Westerner nor any other foreigner has ever seen either, until I show them to you now, tonight. I would not do this, even for you, but your overwhelming beauty affects even I, who am beyond the mortal.

"The first test is one in which you take a piece of paper, simply write your name at the top, and place it yourself in an empty bottle. In four minutes' time, while we pray, some word will come to you from Shaitan, in writing, on the paper on which you signed your name. Let us first proceed to that test."

Clapping his hands to summon his assistant, Ali commanded that an empty bottle, any kind, he said, be brought to him. He also asked for an ordinary writing pad and pencil.

When these were brought he tore off the top sheet, handed it to Miss X, asked her, while his back was turned, to pull her dresses above her knees, place the paper on the warm flesh of her leg and write her name across the top of the paper. He walked across the room while Miss X did as she was told.

Then he returned, took the empty bottle that he had placed on the floor, and asked Miss X to roll the paper so that it would fit in the neck of the bottle. When she had done this he uncorked the bottle and let Miss X herself slide the paper inside it.

He corked the bottle again, with the white paper plainly visible inside, and asked Miss X to hold the bottle in her hands, close to her heart, then he started to chant:

"In Rangoon, in Kashmir, in Delhi, in Bombay, throughout the length and breadth of the land that Allah loves there are the Spirits of the bad, and the Spirits of the good. Here in this humble abode of this Witch

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Doctor of the East there is a maiden young and fair to see. That which is in her mind is sorely tried with wonders. Could it not be that the Spirits of Allah or the Spirits of Shaitan will come to her and ease her problems by telling her what to do. . . ."

For fully four minutes Ali kept up his chant. Miss X hugged the bottle closer and closer to her, as though in fear it would vanish. Her eyes never left the paper. It seemed to her that vapor was rising from it. When Ali stopped his intonation and took the bottle from her, she leaned over on the couch, and unconsciously circled his left arm with her right. Many a millionaire would have exchanged a diamond bracelet for such intimacy, but the seer paid no attention.

Ali uncorked the bottle, holding the open end toward him. He slowly withdrew the piece of paper. Shaking it in the air a few times, he finally brought it to his lips, kissed it, placed it on each temple, and then handed it to Miss X telling her to do what he had done, explaining these moves as the "blessing of Allah or the curse of Shaitan." He then bade her open the paper.

As the film favorite, slowly, with trembling fingers, uncurled it, she almost fainted, for it was completely covered with fine handwriting directly under her name, which she herself had written but five minutes before!

She steeled herself to read it as she regained something of her composure.

"Greetings to the Daughter of the Western World," it read. *"The message that Shaitan refuses you, but which I, Mustapha, friend of Almighty Allah and Mohammed, his prophet, send you, is this:*

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“Fear not to invest in the Rangoon mines which are in the country that believes in my Master. Rather, rejoice you, that of all the unbelievers the generous God, Allah, has selected you to become wealthy beyond your dreams. Your form and face are worthy of a place with the houris of the heaven, and for this and because of the wish of our apostle in your land, Mula Ali, may his time be long in your world, the Great Compassionate has given you the knowledge to acquire these great riches. Peace unto thee.’ ”

“It is a miracle!” she cried. “This blank piece of paper was actually written upon by the gods. I will buy all those shares. Now. Phone the broker. Immediately!”

Miss X was again the commanding, impetuous mistress of all she surveyed. But Ali remained calm.

“My dear pupil, be calm,” he remarked, as though he were not interested in this flight of his visitor. “There is still one more test and it must be gone through. That is the test of ‘The High Priests of the Wizards.’ I told you to bring your slate so that you might go through this test. Unless it is answered as I wish, I will not let you buy this stock.”

Miss X commanded the seer:

“Then by all means let us go through with it.”

Arising from the comfortable lounge, he bowed her to the table.

“I will move away, Miss X,” Ali stated. “When my back is turned, I wish you to write anything on your slate that you care to. However, it must be nothing about the mine or money. Any question, love, health or future will do. It simply is the final test to see if the Spirits are entirely with us.”

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He left the table, turning his back. Miss X picked up the chalk, shielded her hand as she wrote, and then called Ali back.

"Before I return," he said, "place the writing side down on the table, so that neither you nor I can see it. Then I shall resume my seat."

When Miss X had complied with the request, and the writing on the slate was face down on the table, the seer took his customary seat facing her. He moved the slate about with his finger tips for a second, then ordered Miss X to place her hands on top of his, which rested on the slate. They stayed in this position for a moment, when Ali lifted his hands and told Miss X to place his hands on the slate, under the cloth and out of sight.

He then told Miss X to stand behind his chair, and place one of her hands on each of his elbows. They would see if the spirits would answer the question. They were in this position for quite some time when Ali asked Miss X if she had felt his hands move. Upon receiving a negative answer, he lifted up the cloth, and, showing his hands bare of chalk, pointed to the writing on the slate.

"Does this answer your question?" he asked, as he carelessly threw the cloth on the floor.

On the slate was written without punctuation:

"You will get your wish

R—— will be sent home in disgrace"

Miss X picked up the slate, turned it over, showed Ali the question.

"Will a certain director

Outlive me in pictures?"

She cried, "It does answer my question! You surely are a wonder!"

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Some conversation about how Miss X was to bring the cash in the morning after the banks opened concluded the talk, and the movie queen went home after paying a bill that Ali rendered for six visits at one hundred dollars a call, or six hundred dollars in all.

* * * *

Early the following morning, Miss X was at the Hollywood National bank. She presented a check for ten thousand dollars, and asked for it in fifty dollar bills. The paying teller, noting that her account was overdrawn, called one of the senior vice-presidents who explained carefully that her balance was only four thousand dollars.

Miss X fumed and stormed, but it did her no good. Suddenly she had an inspiration.

"I paid one hundred and ten thousand dollars for my house," she said, "I owe only sixty thousand dollars. Will you lend me ten thousand dollars more on it?"

This was agreed upon, the papers drawn up, and Miss X received the cash requested. No matter how many questions the bank official asked, Miss X refused to tell the reason for the loan in that amount.

Packing the bills in a suitcase, she drove to Mula Ali's and without ceremony delivered the cash to the seer.

From there she drove to the studio, happy, without a worry on her mind except how quickly she would make enough money to buy the whole movie company.

She walked directly to the office of the president, a cloak and suit maker who had gone into the movies with a prayer and a shoe string, and in a few short years had made millions.

She was about to go through the swinging gates lead-

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ing to the portals of the inner sanctum when the secretary stopped her.

"I am sorry, Miss X," she said, "but the president is engaged with Mr. R—— and said he wasn't to be disturbed."

"Oh, that's all right," Miss X replied. "He didn't mean me." She flounced through the gates and into the private office.

The president, in his shirt sleeves, had his feet high on the desk, while R—— was running up and down the room, shouting, "I won't have her. I won't have her."

Both men saw Miss X at the same time. The president's face reddened, but R—— rushed toward her.

"I won't have you any longer," he stormed. "You get out or I do."

Miss X ignored him. Turning to the president, she purred:

"Will, dear, what is this loud man talking about?"

The president got up, shook hands with his favorite star, who had brought him so much money, escorted her to a chair and explained:

"R—— says that since this picture started three weeks ago he has made less than a thousand feet of film. The salaries and expenses on the picture are nearly thirty thousand dollars and there is nothing to show for it. He says that this is all your fault, that you are always late, will not work unless you like, and that you generally wreck the morale of the company.

"I hate to talk to you like this, but I am afraid that I will have to ask you for your resignation. I will pay you in full for the rest of your contract of eleven weeks, or forty-four thousand dollars in all, and we will stay good friends, but you will have to leave our company."

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The shock took Miss X off her feet. It couldn't be possible. Yet, what did she care? Soon she would buy the whole company and fire the whole lot of so and so's.

With the regal air of a queen, she said:

"Quite all right, old chap. Give me my check and I'll be glad to quit. I really came here today to say that I wouldn't work with R—— any more, anyway. Get me my check."

The president tried to say a few words, but Miss X would not listen. What the president had really been trying to do was frighten his star. And now it was too late to retreat. The secretary brought in a check as directed, and Miss X folded it nonchalantly, placed it in her purse, and strolled out.

She went to the bank and deposited the check. Outside she saw L——, star of another company. She crossed to her, shook hands, kissed her rival, and chatted of old times when they both had worked at Universal.

L—— was not on location, and the girls drove off together. Miss X invited L—— to her house for luncheon, and en route told her of her fight with R——. L—— explained that she was in trouble at her studio for the same reason, but that she didn't care for soon she would be rich beyond her wildest dreams.

By the time they arrived at Miss X's home both girls were wondering what was on the other's mind. Going to Miss X's boudoir to wash for luncheon, L—— saw the slate. She picked it up.

"Have you been going to Ali's too?" she asked.

"Yes. Why?"

"So have I and only yesterday he told me of a certain stock that will make me a fortune. I can't tell you its name now, but I will do the next best thing, I'll ask him

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if I can tell you. I gave him ten thousand dollars just before I met you and I——”

“What!” cried Miss X. “So did I. The name of the stock I bought is Rangoon——”

“That is what he sold me. Did he use some slates and a bottle and——”

“Yes,” screamed Miss X. “I thought he was doing it only for me. I believed he was a wizard. I would have done anything he told me. Call the cops!”

“Wait. Let’s phone some others.”

L—— and Miss X unearthed three more stars who had given Ali between three thousand dollars and seven thousand dollars, whatever the screen stars could scrape together. The girls called a meeting at once to decide what action they could take. Now fully convinced Ali was a fake, Miss X, out of a job, and L—— skating on thin ice, were beginning to worry for the first time in many years.

Miss X phoned to the president of the company. At first he refused to speak to her, but finally, after she had persuaded his secretary it was a case of “life or death” he came to the phone.

“Will, dear,” Miss X started, “I am in terrible trouble, and so are L—— and several other girls. A fortune teller has gypped us out of almost fifty thousand dollars, and we don’t know what to do!”

Finally the president consented to meet Miss X and the various stars she named in the office of his lawyer. When the girls arrived, half the big film men in Hollywood were there. Detailed explaining. Publicity was feared, so local police were not notified. Private detectives called in, a mad dash to Ali’s house on Hollywood Boulevard where the doors were found locked.

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By use of picklocks the private police were soon in the house. They found the main studio bare except for a small table. Pinned on this was a note reading:

THANKS FOR THE EASY MONEY

There is no use looking for me. I have washed off the fruit stains that gave the Hindu skin effect. I couldn't get a job in Hollywood as an actor, and as I felt the movies owed me a living, I got it being an actor who directed his own part. My love to the girls.

MULA ALI, ex-seer.

The conclave of stars and magnates and police departed. Hours of talk with attorneys and press agents ended with the decision that nothing be told of this to the outside world. Hence no publicity featured this meeting.

Miss X apologized to R——, was restored to the good graces of her company and turned out the finest picture she had ever made. The ten thousand dollars she had lost were made up by the president, because he thought it cheap at any price to have his best box office attraction settle down as Miss X did and work as she never had before.

* * * *

This upheaval in filmland took place two years ago. Afterward many of the leading studios banded together to rid Hollywood of every seer in that city.

From time to time such drives have taken place, and at this writing, city police of both the city of the Angels and Hollywood are making an intensive drive against fortune tellers whether they be astrologers, fake mediums, numerologists who forecast, or just plain palm-ists, although results seem to be negligible.

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But to return to Miss X. The impetuous, improvident actress, whether screen or stage favorite, finds in the weird, a surcease for tired and jaded nerves—and incidentally relief in day dreaming of fortunes to be made.

The studio of "Ali" (this is an actual description of a studio on Hollywood Boulevard that was raided) was designed to attract young women of Miss X's type. The incense and the atmosphere of the Orient holds allure for the young girl.

The stand-off-ish attitude of the seer further attracts her, for every man she meets throws himself at her feet. Thus, by the soothsayer's refusal to recognize her feminine charms, he arouses her curiosity. Once that is done, the rest is easy.

However, even though Ali had not tried to prove the theory that that which repels attracts, his first slate writing performance was worthy of belief even by a smarter and shrewder woman than Miss X, for it is one of the favorite "convincers" of fake mediums, who under the guise of religion, defraud the credulous.

Note the illustration on page 191. Simple, not so?

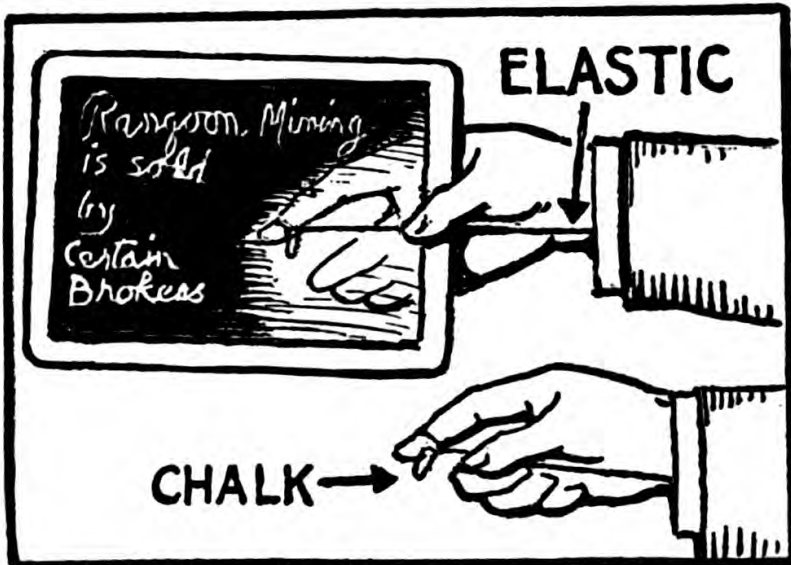
The seer simply wears slippers that are too large for him, slips one off, picks up the chalk between his big toe and the second, and writes.

The only hard part is the hours of arduous practice necessary before writing this way becomes legible. The late Harry Houdini, most famous magician the world has ever known, and former president of the Society of American Magicians, shortly before his death went to police headquarters in New York, and while surrounded by the most astute detectives, did this stunt.

The second impressive act Ali performed for Miss X was one that also requires practice.

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HOW MISS X WAS FOOLED!
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Note the second illustration on page 191. Attached to an elastic which is pinned to the seer's shirt just below the elbow is a small piece of metal, curved to fit the first or second finger. Tightly wedged in this holder is an ordinary piece of chalk.

As the slate is held visible before the dupe's eyes, the fortune teller writes. As soon as he finishes writing he releases the attachment holding the chalk and the elastic pulls it up his sleeve.

In the story of Miss X, note that he rolled up his sleeves. That was done for two reasons; first to show that his hands were empty, if she suspected anything, and secondly to so wedge the apparatus above his wrist that there was no chance of its falling down.

The music that was played while Ali did both the foot and finger writing effect was to kill or deaden the sound of the scratching chalk. Sometimes the seer talks loudly for exactly the same reason.

The Test of Shaitan is one of the oldest resorts of frauds who pose as readers of the future. You can do this trick without a moment's practice.

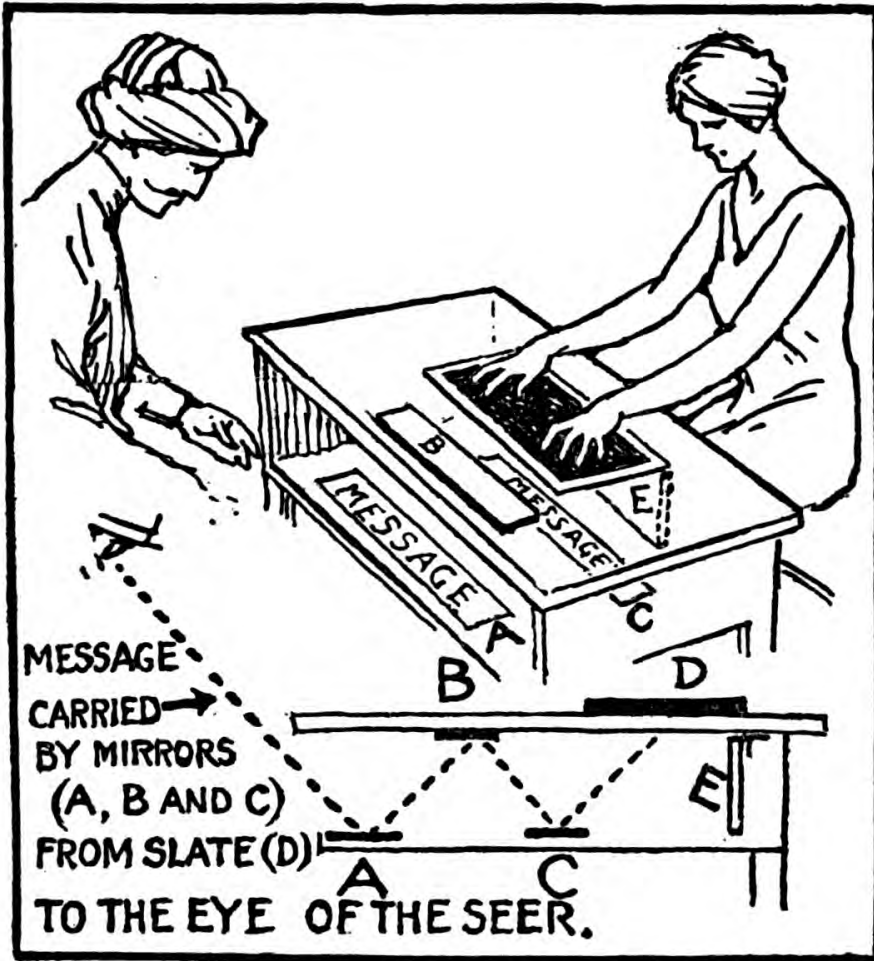
Take an old bottle that has a tight-fitting cork. Wash it out thoroughly and wipe it dry. Fill it with ordinary household ammonia. Let it stand for a few minutes, then pour out the liquid and cork tightly to keep the fumes in the bottle.

Next take an ordinary piece of paper and with a steel pen dipped in a weak solution of copper sulphate (obtainable at any drug store) write anything you wish. Then let it dry. The writing is now invisible.

The next move is to have some friend that you wish to impress write his or her name or initial on the top

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of the paper which you have prepared. Place the paper inside the bottle (or, as Ali did, let your victim do so), tightly cork it, and in five minutes or less the fumes of the ammonia react with the sulphate, and the message



HOW MISS X WAS FOOLED!

Utilization of optical principles convinced the film queen that the "seer" possessed unbelievable mystic powers. Note how the message on Miss X's slate reverses itself and becomes visible to the "Spook Crook."

you have written appears as though a ghostly hand had penned it.

This is a most impressive stunt to work at a party

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some night, but if you do be sure and tell your audience it is for entertainment purposes only.

The last and most impressive trick that Ali did is the most costly to build, but is in common use throughout the country today. As words cannot describe the table properly, study the diagram on page 193 carefully and read the complete description of the parts.

This mirror arrangement is unfailing and absolutely defies detection. As the victim of the seer places the slate face downward on the table the seer maneuvers it about until it is exactly in line with a marked point.

When it is in this place he pulls back the panel or flap which covers the top mirror. Note how the second mirror reverses the writing to make it read correctly.

If the same brains which devised this apparatus were used properly, think of the fortune in a legitimate field that would have awaited their possessor, but unfortunately he died penniless and deserted in 1906.

These four tricks exposed here are not in any way part of a magician's stock in trade. A magician fools you by sleight-of-hand, misdirection and a general knowledge of his art that only comes through years of study. He is supposed to trick you, and he does, but always on a fully lighted stage, not in a dark, mysterious, weird-looking room designed to deceive and to defraud you.

The monetary loss to Miss X meant little, but the terrific strain on her mind and health might have spelled ultimate ruin. As this is being written I have before me a complete case history of an ex-star of the films who is now glad to play extra parts at any price—and belief in fortune tellers is the reason for her downfall.

CHAPTER IX

FIRE EATING AND OTHER FRAUDS

THERE is a man in prison near New York doing a "natural." Under the laws of the State in which he was sentenced, a life term may be only twenty years, and this chap has done twelve years already. He is in under the name of Harry Johnson, but that isn't his name. He has been questioned by experts, but from his answers all any one knows is reflected on his record card:

Name of prisoner: Harry Johnson.

Former address: Traveled with show. No permanent address.

Occupation: Fire eater.

Age: 47.

Previous Convictions: None admitted. Occupation has so burned whorls that present finger prints can not be traced.

Offense: Murder, 2nd degree.

Nearest relative: None admitted.

There is a lot more on the card, but it doesn't mean a thing. Johnson isn't the talking kind. That is, about himself. He'll chat away in every spare moment about fortune telling, the carnival or the circus side of show business, but when the talks turn to his family, he gives a wonderful imitation of a clam.

Prison psychiatrists haven't quite figured him out. When he is in repose, his English is almost equal to a college graduate, but when he is out in the exercise yard,

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the slang and jargon of the carnival is his language. His knowledge of chemicals is uncanny, but the prison rules forbid a murderer to work in the laboratory.

Here is the letter; no changes having been made in the tense which varies in almost every paragraph, contradicting, yet verifying, the prison authorities' story about the man's education.

"I read in the prison library where another drive against fake spirit mediums and fortune tellers was under way. Good for you.

"I just had to write this letter when I read of the work you're doing. If I had been true to my original ambitions of going on the stage as a magician I wouldn't be here now. I'm writing this at all odd hours. You don't get much time for letter writing here, so while I put the date July 22nd on it, I don't know when it will be finished.

"I was pretty good with my hands and was doing some card magic at a cheap stage back in 1912 when somebody in the audience asked me if I was a professional magician. I told him no, but hoped to be some day.

"One thing led to another and this stranger asked me to come to his hotel with him. I did, and that night is one I will never forget because it led directly to this cell—and maybe other ones. He said he was "Swami Hahmi" and worked fairs, carnivals, circus side shows, fortune telling schemes and hundreds of other allied stunts.

"He did some billet reading and some switches that had me crazy, and then fairly hypnotized me with fire eating effects. He was good. He said he was looking for an assistant to do the fire eating end of his shows who knew a little magic and I could have the job.

"My hair stood on end. ME do fire eating. I would have taken the job for nothing. Youth is so impetuous. I went home and told my folks of my great luck. They cautioned me to go slow, but all I could see was throngs of people marvelling at me. So I left

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home under a sort of cloud. No one of my name had ever been other than a business man or banker.

"Pardon me if I transgress, but this is the first time I've ever put my thoughts down on paper and it seems good to be able to write a letter to people who'll understand. The carnival and side show people I knew, I've never gotten in touch with since I've been in here. I'm through with them and that life forever. Maybe when I get out of here, you'll give me a job helping run down the fortune tellers, and the phoney swamis who hook young boys and give them a "chance." A "chance" that eventually will land them in jail.

"My writing you is to tell you about the people the swami and I "took." It was more than criminal, now I look back. The lure of the game and youth held me at it in the beginning and when I was older I couldn't quit. I didn't know anything else. And I knew with my past, I could never get a job.

"I remember the first time the swami gyped an old woman. I didn't realize what a rotten racket his was, or what a fool I was. She lived in a small town near Akron, Ohio. The Swami was with a carnival doing a fortune telling act and I was the ballyhoo. I worked my fire eating stuff (didn't take me long to learn it, but I burned myself many times before I did master the act) to get the townies lined up. The swami was working a message from heaven racket and in the crowd that saw my bally was this old lady we later trimmed.

"Well, she went in the tent after my act was over and the shills had started the parade to the ticket wagon. The swami got a message from her son and the old lady went for it in a big way. If you are not familiar with that hokum, the swami looks in the crystal, stalling for time while the questions are being framed back of the platform, and says "I see here a message from a son who died about three years ago. He says 'mama, I see you. Your hair is white, and I see you wearing my picture.' I get the name of John or James. Is there anyone here whose son died three years ago by that name?"

"It's a good bet somebody by the name of John or James died

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within three years and the mother has white hair, isn't it? Well, this old lady raises her hand and tells the swami it must be her son who was killed by a threshing machine almost three years ago. His name was James. The swami works fast in a case like this and gets the old lady to write a question to James. While she is doing that, he is busy answering the questions asked by the balance of the audience. He got the questions by using the old reliable switching question stunt. (Explained in detail in Chapter XIII.)

"After the show was over the swami meets the old lady personally and makes a date to visit her the following morning to see if he can get Jimmy (as the old lady calls her boy) to bring some messages. We made a lot of inquiries about town and found out all there was to know about the old lady and her Jimmy and we were set.

"About ten the next morning we went over to her house. It was one of those old farm houses with lots of rooms, none of 'em large, and low ceilings. You know the type if you ever lived in the country. A sort of house of seven gables, with antiquity written all over it. The swami took me along for atmosphere. He was certainly shrewd at setting a stage for this kind of show. I didn't think much of the wrong we were doing. I just figured it was a good laugh.

"When we entered, Mrs. Cole, for that was her name, greeted us as though we were a gift from the gods. It was a scream. She gave us home made apple pie, you know the kind one reads about. It was early in the day, but that kind of pie is the sort New Englanders eat for breakfast.

"The swami opens up with a talk about the dead never dying and that some gifted disciples of the Hindoo wizards and sorcerers were in touch with spirits at all times. The swami, or to give his right name, or at least the name he gave me, Billy Taylor, gave the house and the old lady his blessings, and we were ready to give the works:

"Taylor starts his spiel like this:

" 'I have with me Beni Russi, famous student of the fire eating

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Hindoo seers who only impart their knowledge to those who are under the guidance of a friend of the dead. Such a man am I.'

"As Mrs. Cole leaned forward with her eyes and mouth almost distorted, my mouth also almost fell open. I had been called lots of things but never 'Beni Russi' before. I hardly knew myself as a student of the fire eating Hindoos.

"Taylor went on:

" 'Mrs. Cole, to let you see how the spirits protect those who favor them, I will have Beni Russi drink boiling, burning oil before you, and to prove how honest and reliable we are, the oil we will use will be kerosene from your own lamp supply.'

"I was beginning to feel ashamed and amazed at the way Taylor was putting it over the old lady, because I felt sorry for her, but I want to say he certainly was convincing. If I hadn't been in on the stunt, I too would have felt spirits were in and about the room myself.

"Mrs. Cole got the kerosene lamp. They apparently didn't have either gas or electric light and I tell you her hands were trembling. Taylor placed it near the window and sort of salaamed in front of it. He said:

"Geni of the lamp, Beni Russi is here to do my bidding. Under your protection, he will proceed.

"He then took the chimney off the lamp and withdrew the wick and cap. Motioning me to pick up my ladle, he lit the oil. I dipped the ladle in the stove and while waiting for it to get red hot, he kept pumping her about her son and his past life.

"Then he says, 'Beni will now eat the charcoal as it glows red hot and after that we'll try to get a message through from your boy.'

"I put the fork in the coal stove and took out the smallest piece I could find and started to eat it. The old lady fainted as the smoke came out of my mouth. Taylor turned to me and says 'We got her, so let's work fast.'

"I didn't know what he meant, until he takes one of his phoney slates out of the bag and scrawls a message on it. He then puts

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some water on the lady and brings her to. I sure felt like a dog to be in on the swindle.

"Well, he puts her in a handy chair and while she is getting over her faint steps in the other room and gets his slate all set. He was using a roller shade type, and he certainly was good at it.

"Taylor comes back in the room and darkens it by pulling down the shades, only leaving enough light to come in to make the room look ghastly. Turning to Mrs. Cole he talks of Jimmy, and how the spirits have been whispering to him all night about him.

"He then picks up the slate, hands Mrs. Cole a piece of chalk and says he is ready. Putting the slate in front of Mrs. Cole, and showing her how it's blank on both sides, he tells her if she will hold the chalk tightly the spirits will bring her a message on the blank slate.

"He closed his eyes and certainly put on a good swami act. I never saw a swami but if they are as good as Taylor, they are good. Mrs. Cole was trembling all over. The poorly lighted room and the miracle of drinking boiling oil, and eating red hot charcoal sure had her on edge as it would anyone.

"As Mrs. Cole watched the slate Taylor said suddenly:

"Jimmy. Quick! Write a letter to your mother."

"While she was watching, there comes the message:

MOTHER DEAR I AM HAPPY. GIVE THIS GOOD SWAMI
SOME LIBERTY BONDS TO INVEST FOR YOU. I SEE
YOU MAKE SOME MONEY.

"I tell you, it was a shame to take the money. I'm not going to bore you with what happened, but Taylor left the house with eight one hundred dollar Liberty bonds and I was on the road to Hell. Before he went he kept telling her all about Jimmy. The carnival left town and with it went Mrs. Cole's money.

"I was heartsick over it all, but Taylor gave me \$50.00 and I quieted down after he told me I was equally guilty in the eyes of the law. That started me off on a real gyping career.

"We worked the burning oil and charcoal eating and sometimes

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threw in a special session of eating 'red hot steel' in liquid form. That was reserved for special occasions because sometimes I got burned with that trick. Taylor and I made real money until I quit him. I figured if I was going to do the dirty work, I'd get all of the money instead of just some of it.

"I did pretty well on my own hook using all of Taylor's tricks, and throwing in some of my own good luck. I don't know if you know the table for bringing 'messages from Hades,' but I used that one a lot. Cost me \$300.00 for the phoney table.

"I wish you could impress upon everyone to beware of the fortune tellers and fake spirit mediums. I started to write a book of my adventures but quit because I was getting in deeper and deeper. I'm safe writing this letter because I got a 'book' (life term).

"If I had ever thought where my steps were leading I think I wouldn't have been so fast to accept Taylor's offer. I hope this letter hasn't been too much for you to read. I just had to write.

"What am I in here for? I hit Taylor over the head with a poker one night when he drifted into my 'office' where I was giving 'readings' and wanted to horn in on my trade.

"He said he'd taught me all I knew, and as I was pretty well fed up with the game when he came in, I walloped him one. He picked up the poker to come back at me, and in the battle I got it away from him and let him have it. Didn't mean to kill him, and it was self defense anyway, but I was handed the limit.

"I've been three weeks writing this, so I'll quit now. The warden knows my story and he'll confirm it. He doesn't know who I am and neither do you. No one ever shall. If I'd been a fortune teller though I wouldn't be here now, would I? Well, I'd have seen my end. As I was one of the 'best,' and landed in the 'pen,' that shows how far any fortune teller can look ahead."

"If this letter appeals to you, send me a box of cigs."

* * * *

What a human document is this letter running as it does the entire gamut of youthful happiness to middle age despair. What thoughts must be in Johnson's mind

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each night as he lays on the hard mattress in his little prison cell. My editing it may have taken away some of his bitterness of expression, but it still remains the out-pouring of a human's heart and soul.

This boy of good family who became a fire eater, a fortune teller and then a murderer, yet retained enough family pride to keep his true identity secret, can not be all bad. His adventure in swindling Mrs. Cole must have been repeated time and time again . . . and the sad part of it all is that somewhere this very minute someone is falling for the same type of deception.

The 'drinking of burning oil,' according to Houdini, late great master of magic and escapes, dates back to 1681, although in his book "Miracle Mongers and Their Methods" (E. P. Dutton and Co. 1921) he states that long before this, charlatans of some type were probably doing the same thing. Probably one of the best descriptions of how these fire eaters "drink" boiling oil is given by Walter Gibson in his "Book of Secrets" published in 1927 by the Mason Publishing Company.

Gibson, a most prolific writer on magical and allied subjects, states in his book:

"The first and most important principle (in fire eating) is that the mouth, when well filled with saliva, becomes almost fireproof of its own accord, and strange as it may seem, can stand heat that the hand can not. Besides this little known fact, fire eaters employ 'fake' methods unknown to the spectators.

"In 'swallowing' burning oil, the performer does not ladle up liquid but merely lets the surface of the spoon become wet. The few drops that adhere to the spoon will burn for a few moments, giving the fire eater time

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to raise the ladle to his mouth slowly. Then, he exhales, extinguishing the flame and deliberately puts the spoon in his mouth, as though swallowing the burning oil."

Simple explanation isn't it? Yet, there are few fire eaters left, for there is danger even though it all is a trick. Note in Johnson's letter that he tells how badly he was burned while learning the "art."

The eating red hot charcoal act that Johnson used to further impress his victims is just as simple as the swallowing of burning oil. It is used today by some of the Sun Worshipers in rites such as are explained in Chapter V. The ordinary fake spirit mediums do not attempt this type of trick, leaving it to the "experts" in the Sun Worshipers Cult.

Referring to the Houdini book again for historical data on this stunt of "eating" red hot charcoal, we find the first known users of it picked charcoal as the "food" for the "Fire Kings" of the Middle Ages because even to the primitive people charcoal was known as a "fierce burner," as it burns with an extremely intense heat.

Johnson does not say how he worked his trick, but probably in this manner, as explained by Houdini in the "Miracle Mongers" book:

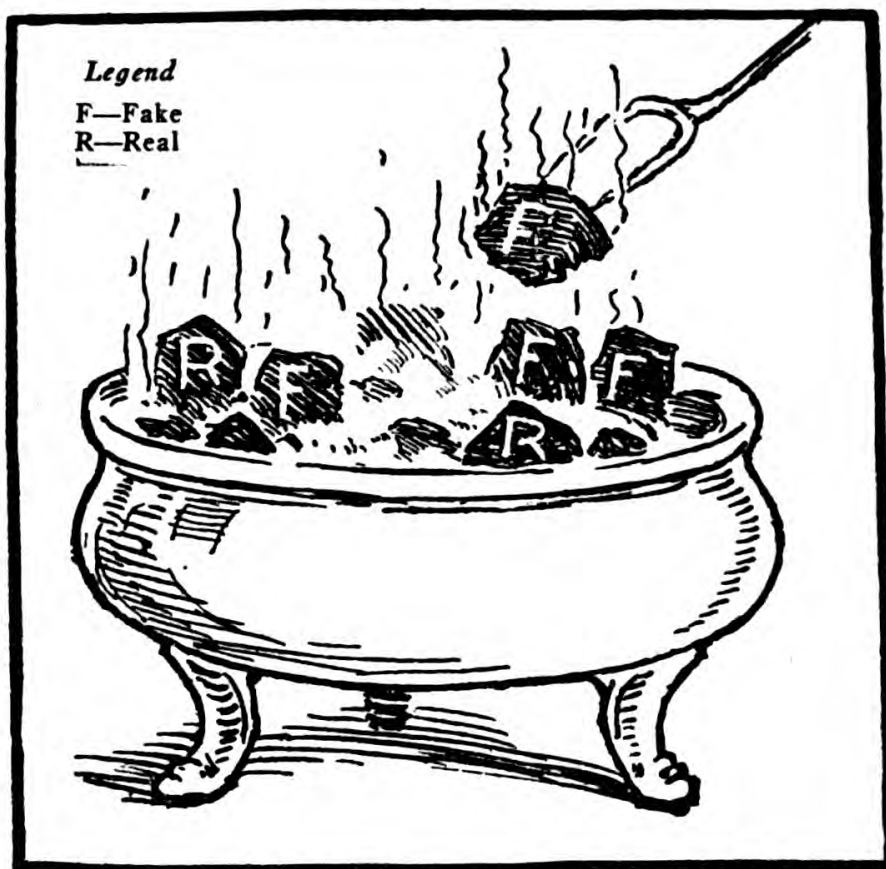
"Mixed with the charcoal in the brazier are a few coals of soft white pine which, when burnt, look exactly like charcoal. These will not burn the mouth as will charcoal. They are picked up with a fork which will penetrate the pine blocks, but not the charcoal, the latter becoming too brittle."

Another time tried method is the one which "employs small balls of burned cotton (quoting Houdini again) in a dish of burning alcohol. When lifted on the fork

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these have the appearance of charcoal, but are absolutely harmless if the mouth is closed immediately, shutting off the air and, of course, extinguishing the flame."

Houdini also gave the first intelligent explanation of the "drinking of molten lead." That is a stunt that al-



ways fooled me, and if it once puzzled me, after years of active interest in magic and all that pertains to it, I imagine it puzzles you and an explanation is welcome.

Johnson's letter brought me many memories of fire eaters who drink molten lead and some of the fake spirit mediums who do the same, using their methods. One medium in particular, in Pittsburg some years ago,

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built up quite a following as a "friend of the spirits" with his fire eating proclivities. He used to "drink" molten metal to prove to steel workers he was a reincarnated steel man. He must have made \$50,000 a year out of the racket.

His method is practically universally used and yet never detected.

He used a large spoon which he exhibited to the "worshippers" as empty. He then dipped it in a pot containing melting lead which was kept over a huge burning fire. Exhibiting the spoon full of the molten metal, he tilted his head backwards and "poured" the white hot liquid metal down his throat! What a sensation the "worshippers" got.

You can do the same thing if you wish, but I warn you not to try it. Have a silversmith make you a double handled soup spoon. Buy fifty cents worth of mercury (quicksilver) from the nearby drug store and pour it in the handle. As you exhibit the spoon empty, hold the handle tilted toward you.

When you "dip" the spoon in the molten metal, turn the handle down, the quicksilver runs out, and you take it in your mouth. Make a face as though in pain, move your mouth about and then let the quicksilver fall into your hand. Exhibit it! You have taken molten metal in your mouth and moulded it into small balls. Be careful however not to dip the spoon in the hot metal. And be extraordinarily careful not to swallow any of the quicksilver.

* * * *

The "roller" slate that Johnson mentioned is one used by spirit mediums everywhere. It is never used by magicians as its use is not fitted to a fully lighted stage. The

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darkened rooms used by mediums are necessary for its use. Before I explain how it works, let me give you a case history in which this slate was the *ONLY* device used by a medium to defraud *ANOTHER MEDIUM*. That gives you an idea of how good the "roller slate" is.

Just about a year ago in a Western city, near the Pacific, there lived a "student medium," a Mary Howe by name, who was a confirmed believer in spiritualism, ghost messages and all similar manifestations of the occult.

But since then her faith in the reliability of getting signs from the other world has been decidedly shaken for she was fleeced by a "convert" who professed to her own beliefs.

When the convert, John Malone, first attended a seance at Mrs. Howe's home he was seemingly impressed by the mystic "message" that came to him from "Aunt Cora," long since dead and by the phosphorescent materialization of "Cousin George" who had been killed in France.

Malone began to take great interest in "spirits" after Mrs. Howe's seances and became a student medium himself. He began to exhibit a surprising aptitude for psychic messages and Mrs. Howe felt great pride in having brought him in contact with the spirit world.

There came a time a few weeks after the two "kindred spirits" in spiritualism had demonstrated to the other how spirits came and went leaving messages in their trail, that Malone showed Mrs. Howe a slate that he said had brought him great results in getting messages.

Mrs. Howe was anxious to see the slate and Malone exhibited it to her. It was an ordinary ten cent store

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slate to all appearances and Mrs. Howe was satisfied that it would indeed be a marvel if, as Malone said, messages flashed on it instantaneously.

The room was semi-darkened and both mediums went into a state of "psychic reception," meaning they were "akin to the spirits." The blank slate was visible in the darkness. Malone began to groan, the spirits were coming!

"I see them," he shrieked. "There they are! Watch the slate!"

His voice grew louder and louder. The shrieks were more piercing. Mrs. Howe was more excited. The blank slate was trembling in Malone's hand.

Crash! A weird, uncanny rustle! Another shriek from Malone. A message was on the slate! It read:

"Invest in the platinum and gold mine. Malone will give you details."

Malone stopped his groaning and came out of his "trance." He glanced at his slate and read the message. Turning to the bewildered fellow medium, he announced he did not know what the spirits meant.

He was struck with a bright idea. He would do "automatic writing" with the spirits guiding his hand. Mrs. Howe, still half hypnotized with the miraculous message, agreed.

Producing a notebook, Malone started the automatic writing. Appropriately or humorously the first words written by the "invisible guiding hand" were:

"The mine is at Sucker Creek."

Professing not to understand, Malone continued his writings. Out of the eerie maps and cryptic "ghost" writ-

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ings appeared instructions for Mrs. Howe to invest in this mine. Her money was to be used for the nucleus of a corporation which was to develop the fabulously wealthy mine.

Mrs. Howe was not convinced that she should give up her hard earned money, so Malone continued his writing. A message came from "Fatima, long dead queen of the Egyptians" who wrote to Mrs. Howe, through the medium of Malone:

"I'll spank you if you don't invest."

She then promised Malone she would invest but that she wanted some time to think things over. He said good night, taking his slate with him.

Malone returned the following night and produced the notebook in which appeared the cryptic writings. Mrs. Howe had invited a few friends, believers in spiritualism to see the "new medium" bring messages. He sat at the table and while the amazed men and women stood about the table message after message poured from the spirits onto the pages of the book.

Mrs. Howe and her friends were convinced and as all the ready cash Mrs. Howe could produce was \$885, Malone got a message from the "Queen Fatima," that he should use \$385 of the money for a car and the balance should be invested in the mine.

For some reason, the mine with its hoard of "gold and platinum" didn't materialize as promptly as had the "messages from the dead." Somehow the "contact" had been broken. Perhaps Malone's guide and "Fatima" were offended by the lack of more ready cash. For no more messages came about the mine.

A month of waiting for Malone to get "guidance from Fatima" passed and Mrs. Howe lost much of her

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confidence in her fellow medium whose heavenly messages had ceased, so she turned to a mundane district attorney with her tale of woe.

Corporeal beings in the form of officers placed the convert Malone in jail on a charge of swindling Mrs. Howe out of her money.

Mrs. Howe, posing as a victimized woman without friends, related on the witness stand at Malone's trial that she had been defrauded by her own misplaced faith in her own religion. She produced a forty-eight page book full of Malone's spirit writings as well as witnesses who saw the "automatic writing," being done by him.

The judge did not listen to Malone's plea of "the spirits did it" and sentenced him to San Quentin Prison to serve a term of from one to ten years on a charge of swindling. As he was being led away, Mrs. Howe called after him:

"I know how you did the automatic writing, but how did you work the slate stunt?"

Malone called back:

"Don't you wish you knew?"

* * * *

Which brings us back to where we started. For of course Malone was using a roller slate of the type Johnson mentions in his letter.

The so-called "roller slate" derives its name from the fact that hidden rollers play a great part in its construction. It is one of the most commonly used slates by fake spirit mediums. See the illustration on page 210 and note its working parts. It is very popular because it is easy to work and the writing appears so suddenly that, as in the case of Mrs. Howe, it fools even a medium.

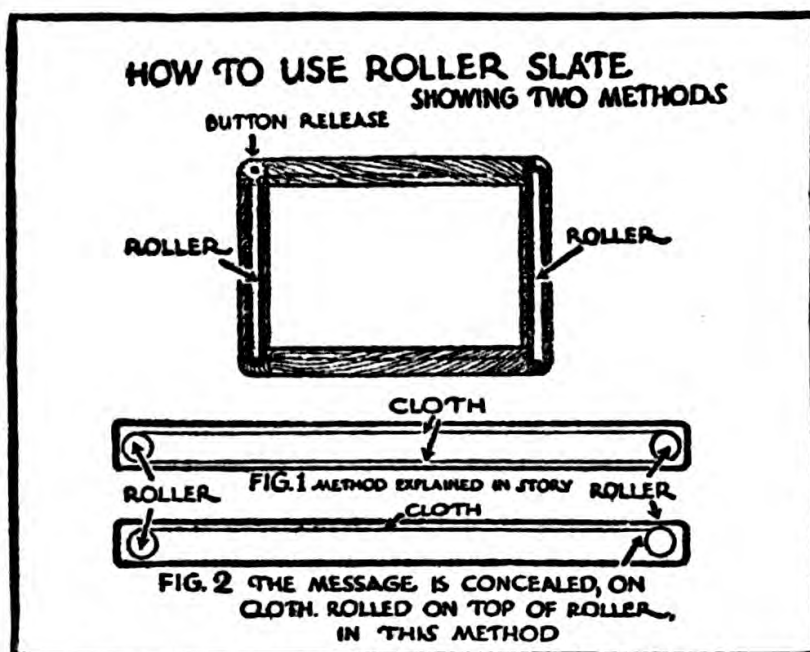
The roller slate is composed of a wooden frame (just

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like ten cent store wooden edged slates have) but the slate itself is an absolute "fake." The part that resembles a slate, is a piece of cloth which the medium paints with a liquid, or silicate slating, which, when hard and dry, is similar to the real article.

This cloth is twice the length of the slate but just the exact width. The two ends of the silicate painted



cloth are glued or cemented together to form an endless piece. This loops from top to bottom of slate as shown in the drawing above.

There is a small roller in both top and bottom pieces of the frame, the ends being made hollow to hold them. Over these rollers run the cloth which must be stretched firmly and tightly. Just where the cloth is cemented is a little black button or stud of black rubber. Some mediums use hard leather for the button. This button controls

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the rollers allowing the cloth to be pushed up or down at will.

When the button is pushed, the roller releases the cloth, and the message which is written on the cloth at the rear of the frame, obviously snaps about and comes to the front where the message is visible.

There is a slight hiss and noise when this roller releases the side bearing the message, but loud groaning or moaning, kills the noise and sometimes the hiss of the cloth aids the effect and is attributed to the spirits.

Automatic writing as worked by Malone is an innocent fad which grew out of the Ouija board, popular many years ago. The pencil is seemingly out of control, but a clever manipulator pushes the lead wherever he wants it to go. An amazing thing about automatic writing is that perfectly innocent people get "messages from the spirits" by that method—and believe it.

Not so long ago a very nice young lady at whose home I was visiting told me of how she was getting great results through automatic writings. I was interested and watched her. The results were fine, but the pencil only wrote that which her sub-conscious brain told it to.

Many phenomena have come to light through automatic writing and while the paragraph above indicates that the pencil *can* be controlled, I am convinced that sometimes unexplainable forces drive it to write messages beyond understanding. Never, to my knowledge, however, has there been a case of automatic writing bringing messages to strangers, who paid a medium to get them some word from "spirits."

This is a good point at which to introduce the fact that the magicians who offer to duplicate any "spirit manifestations by material minds" are not absolutely con-

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vinced that uncanny, weird, inexplicable things have never taken place. In this connection, let me quote from a book "Dr. Q" written by C. Alexander for the purpose of dealing with counterfeit spiritualist mediums with whom a magician might come in contact. In it is explained that "by the knowledge imparted by this book, magicians can separate genuine and false, and thus help in the research for genuine psychic phenomena."

The author of "Dr. Q" defines his position and that of almost all magicians so well, I reprint his words exactly, for they are my own sentiments:

"The author wishes it distinctly understood that he neither affirms or denies the existence of psychic and spiritual phenomena, because it would be taking in too much territory for him. . . ."

BUT, the magicians I know say that genuine spirit mediums don't tell fortunes, materialize dead people, use slates to obtain messages, read messages sealed in envelopes or do the hundred and one "supernatural" things that fool the public. Beware the medium who goes into a trance and tells you "Uncle this, and Aunt that" are sending messages to you.

* * * *

One more trick must be explained. It is referred to in Johnson's letter, but because of the fact that it is one of the best revelations in this series, it was saved for now. And that trick is the one referred to as the "phoney table for bringing messages from Hades."

This "message from Hades" trickery is one of the most vicious of all the fortune teller's deviltries. It probably has cost more people wealth and happiness than one can imagine, yet little is known of it, even in the magical profession. Let me give you a concrete case.

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Ramon Torques had worked for sixteen years as "mess boy" on a United States battleship. He didn't get much pay, but whatever he got was saved. Of course, he picked up tips here and there, and gathered quite a nest egg in his score of years' service. He left the navy and opened a small "coffee pot" in a railroad town where Mexicans, Filipinos and other Spanish speaking types worked. He was happy hearing once again the language of his people.

About four months after he settled in this town, there arrived a man who called himself Harli, "Guardian of the Threshold." He rented a vacant store near the railroad station and erected a gaudy sign proclaiming to the world that he knew past, present and future, was master of all tongues and in particular most modestly admitted he was a near Messiah.

He didn't tell fortunes for money. No, he was not interested in gold. He was in business to help others. He merely sold "Rabbit Foot Luck Charms" for five dollars each, and threw in your fortune free. The charms were made with a metal clasp to hang on one's person. In a recent advertisement in a well-known magazine they were offered at \$8.75 per gross. Think of his profit!

He wasn't in town more than two pay days when most of the railroad workers (track repair men and builders) were wearing these "Luck Charms." The fortunes he told were wonderful. Every three and four dollar a day man who consulted him was going to be a millionaire some day, go home, marry a pretty señorita and raise a big family. Never was there a prophesy of impending disaster.

Eventually Ramon heard the tales of the miracle man. With every piece of pie and every cup of coffee he served he heard of Harli, till finally his superstitions overcame

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his common sense and he too bought a rabbit foot charm. His fortune was somewhat unlike the rest, for the seer saw him becoming rich overnight. The spirits weren't working just so, so another session was necessary. Would Ramon come back tomorrow? He would.

And did. Instead of being received in the outer office and interviewed behind a screen, Harli took him into a rear chamber, gaily decorated in those brilliant colors our citizens in the Islands adore. In this room were two chairs and a table. Harli took one seat, Ramon the other. A long and serious talk on religion made Ramon uncomfortable, for on the battleship he had forgotten the church of his birth, and the seer's sermon on the other world touched his conscience. He squirmed in his seat, wishing the soothsayer would stop.

Eventually he did, and explained that Ramon had been selected by him out of all the people in town to become part owner of a diamond mine. Never was a man more excited, happier or alarmed. Fright because of the presence of the ghosts whom Harli said were all about, invisible in a cloak that rendered them unseen, but he was happy over the prospect of being part owner of a diamond mine.

"Ramon," the seer stated in tones that would forbid the questioning of the precious words as they dropped like pearls from his mouth, "I will permit you to join the inner circle of those who converse and talk with the gods, and their messengers on earth, the ghosts. I will not let you see them, but will permit them to write messages to you. And these messages will come to you in the brightest light, a feat accomplished by no one other than myself.

"Sit at this table and take this large sheet of paper.

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Place your initials at the top and then we will proceed to bring words from the ghosts that will tell how we are to obtain possession of the diamond mine, for even I have not yet learned the entire story of it. All I know is that the spirits have told me to select one trustworthy man who has proven himself to be above reproach, and permit him to share in the wealth which is to come."

Ramon's fingers were nervously twitching and playing with the paper which Harli had handed him. The same sense of impatience which had almost upset him when the seer had been lecturing him on religion now possessed him again. Harli began his instructions once more.

"Take this pencil and write your initials and date of birth at the top of the paper. Right! Now that you have done so, lay the paper on the top of the table. Let us begin to invoke the aid of the ghosts."

In an attitude of prayer, the sorcerer raised his hands toward heaven and rolled his eyes in a manner which was presumed to be reverential. He started to chant:

"Ghosts who abound and yet never are seen, hear this prayer. The location of this diamond mine that is to be the property of this believer, whom I have selected, has never been disclosed to me. Please come and write before our eyes its exact address. Then explain what I must do. By my mystic Occult power, I command you!"

As he stopped the prayer which had been said in a low monotone with hesitancy marking each word, Harli turned to Ramon.

"Keep your eyes firmly fixed on the paper. At first you will feel a cold draft as of the approach of death, and as that suddenly stops an odd heat will fill the room. Then, while you watch the paper, suddenly the writing of ghosts will appear before your very eyes."

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As the sorcerer stopped speaking, Ramon felt the cold breath of death of which Harli had told him. A chill ran up and down his spine and suddenly as the whiff of cold air had come it vanished! He opened his eyes and looked at the paper. It was still blank, and his initials in his own handwriting were at the top.

In contrast to the suddenness with which he had felt the cold air come and go, so slowly did a touch of warm air come as though from the very table itself!

"Look," commanded Harli. "The paper curls. Feel the heat. 'Tis the breath of the friendly ghost. Even as the cold air heralded his coming, so does the hot air indicate his continued presence. Watch the paper!"

His last words were almost a shout. Visibly, on the paper as it was curling on the table, writing faintly appeared. More and more distinct, until finally it was fully legible.

Ramon was frightened beyond belief. He was about to rise from his chair and run, when the cold air that he had felt before hit him full in the face. Sinking back limply in the chair, and holding the table for support, he was almost motionless when Harli ordered him to pick up the paper from the center of the table. The cold air was gone, and the heat was not as pronounced as before.

"The ghosts have gone, even as they came, invisibly," Harli told him.

Reaching timidly for the paper Ramon picked it up with shaking fingers. Sure enough, under the initials and birthdate that he had written but a few seconds before, was this message from "the dead!"

"YOU WOULD PROFIT FROM YOUR BELIEF IN ME AND
I WOULD HAVE YOU. I AM A PROSPECTOR WHO DIED

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RETURNING TO CIVILIZATION AFTER FINDING A WONDERFUL DIAMOND MINE IN MEXICO. HERE IS A MAP GIVING BEST DIRECTIONS TO FIND IT. LET HARLI LEAVE TOMORROW AND THEN WIRE YOU TO COME ON TO HELP HIM DEVELOP THE PROPERTY.

And, below the writing appeared a perfect map giving exact instructions on how to find the lost mine of the dead prospector. Ramon was no longer frightened. He was merely excited.

"I am as greatly surprised and pleased as you," Harli told Ramon. "I would leave in the morning but I have no money for railroad and other expenses. You know I seek no money for myself. I have said this since I first came to town, so I am afraid you will have to finance the trip."

Ramon agreed to do so and arrangements were completed at once for Ramon to advance \$2200 for expenses which were to be returned to him out of the first diamonds sold. Harli was quite willing to agree to the 50-50 split and the men parted, Ramon to return to his coffee pot and Harli said he would "spend the rest of the night in prayer."

The following day Ramon gave Harli \$2200 in small bills and bade the seer God-speed. Harli left promising to wire as soon as he had found the mine and Ramon agreed to come on.

A month went by and no word came from the "friend of the ghosts." Another month and Ramon began to worry. He told his story to Bill O'Hara, head of the railroad police, who let out a whistle and slapped Ramon on the back:

"You are stuck," the private policeman told him. "And stuck bad. You ever hear of Chung Foo, who runs a

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coffee pot at the junction west of here. No? Well, he's got a place like yours and this same bird stuck him like he stuck you.

"There is no diamond mine, that is phoney, and so is this faker's whole racket. He got the chink for more than he hooked you."

Ramon was more thunderstruck by the truth than he had been by "the visits of the ghosts." His savings of a lifetime were almost gone. Broken in spirit he went with O'Hara to the vacant store that Harli had rented.

Entering they found it was unchanged except that the table was gone. The gaudy banners still hung in place. The chart of the signs of the Zodiac had not been moved. Dirty and dusty from the two months of disuse, it held no touch of the Occult now.

O'Hara looked about for some clue as to where Harli might have really gone, but could find none. He did come across an opened bottle marked "sulphuric acid" but that meant nothing to him in connection with Ramon's loss. The case was reported to the local police but there was nothing they could do except send out a general alarm, which was done at once.

The story fell into the writer's hands and the supposedly unimportant half-empty bottle of sulphuric acid furnished the clue to the whole story. The tale of the cold and then hot air completed the revelation. The table of "the message from Hades" had been used with modern "improvements."

The phoney table referred to by Johnson was one of the genuine "old reliables" when it came to defrauding. "Messages from Hades" tables utilize the principles of invisible inks and are worked on a larger scale, with more elaborate preparation. As explained in another chapter

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there are only about fifteen basic methods used by fortune tellers, fraudulent mediums and Spook Crooks. But there are about a thousand or more variations. The table for getting these "messages from the dead" is one, but it defies detection of uneducated people, no matter how clever they are.

(See illustration on page 220.)

The table is an ordinary kitchen table to all appearances—yet the entire top is false. It is about five inches thick and in it is concealed a small electric fan (sold at any chain drug store or hardware shop) and a four wire bed warmer.

The paper is already prepared when the victim arrives, the message having been written in which diluted sulphuric acid, a solution that needs only the application of heat to bring it out. When the victim writes his initials on the top of the paper, he does so at the command of the fake soothsayer who is thus impressing his dupe by psychology, to prove no paper has been substituted.

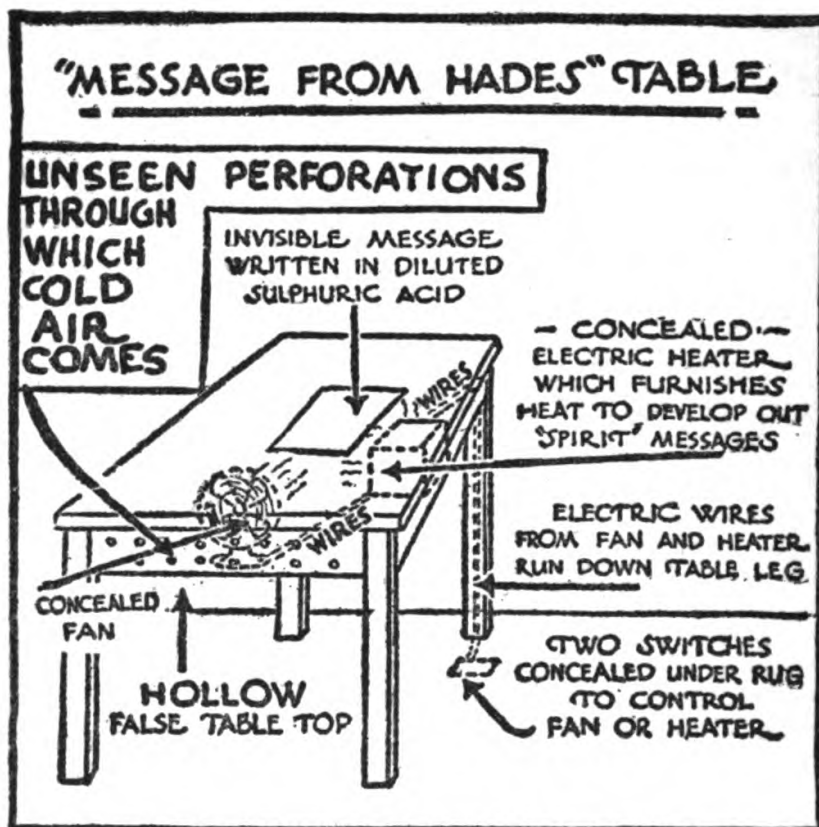
He then lays the paper on the table, where shown, a place that is directly over the heater. The seer "prays" or stalls for time while heat is being generated in the wires and at the same time uses the electric fan to force cold air at the victim. The air comes through minute perforations in the end of the table. The fan is never left on long enough to create an impression that the air is coming steadily from the same place.

Connections to both fan and heater are through wires which run inside of the table leg nearest the faker, and then under the rug to a nearby electric light connection. A cut-off switch is also concealed under the rug, directly in front of the soothsayer's chair, the fan being controlled

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by a switch to the right, and the heater by one to the left.

Before electricity was common, a lamp was concealed



in the false top and the table was most clumsy. Electricity gave the "improvement" of the fan!

When Ramon looked for the paper on which the "spirits" had written and drawn the map, all he found was a mass of yellow pulp. Sulphuric acid eats the paper in a short while. Thus no evidence is left.

CHAPTER X

BANK CASHIER SUICIDE

JAMES ARNOLD, president of the State Bank of Waukee, slammed the telephone back on his desk, muttered an inaudible oath, shoved a group of farm mortgages waiting to be O. K.'d in a heap, and swung about on his swivel chair so he could look out the open window.

"Send Grogan here," he growled to the combination bookkeeper, secretary and lunch time relief paying teller, Margery Swanson.

In due time the cashier arrived.

'Grogan," Arnold announced, "Pete Halsey over to the State Bank of Halaville just called up. Malone, the bank examiner, just left him. That means we're due to be looked over tomorrow and I wanted to go fishing. What shape are the books in?"

"Fine, sir. There is no need for you to be here. Go ahead. I'll take care of him."

So James Arnold finally decided to go.

When the bank president returned from his trip, his car had hardly stopped when a crowd began to gather about him. Every one was so excited, talking all at once, that Arnold could not at first learn the trouble. Finally he buttonholed one man.

"Grogan shot himself in the head in the bank at lunch time today! The bank examiner is there now. Are we going to lose our money? What's it all about? The doors of the bank are closed."

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One of the junior clerks opened the door for Arnold. His face was white as he started to explain what had happened. Arnold shoved him aside and went to his own office.

There he found Malone, the examiner, going over the bank's ledgers. Piled besides the books were mortgage papers, bonds, and piles of cash, all either waiting checking or rechecking. Hanson, the chief of police, was personally on guard in his office with drawn revolver, and besides him was a city detective.

"Malone!" Arnold gasped. "What happened? Did Grogan really kill himself? Is the bank hit badly? What's the story?"

In a calm, collected voice Malone related the facts.

"Grogan killed himself about twelve-thirty today when I was at lunch. There wasn't anything wrong that I could spot then or now, but there was one piece of paper for twenty-five thousand dollars that I questioned him about. It's a loan made to a Mrs. Rose LaBelle. It's O.K.'d by you, but I wasn't sure that the collateral, East Indian Copper Mines, was all it should be. All I said to Grogan at the time was, 'Who's this Mrs. LaBelle, and where is this stock listed? Looks like too big a loan on an unknown security——' "

"I never O.K.'d such a loan," Arnold broke in. "Let me see that note."

He nervously scrutinized it, particularly looking at the sprawling initials, "J.B.A.," which were on the back of the note in the place they ordinarily should appear.

"Looks like my writing," the banker said slowly, "but I never saw this note before."

Malone took the note back, carefully examined it again, and passed it to Hanson. The police officer com-

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pared the initials to those on another note and shook his head.

"Gentlemen," he stated, "I'm no handwriting expert, but I have a feeling that Grogan traced the initials on this LaBelle note and paid over the cash to himself."

"Might be," Malone agreed. "I have checked the cash and the books and find that everything is absolutely ship-shape. If the note isn't all right, then there is a loss of twenty-five thousand dollars. But Grogan's bonding company will have to make that good."

He told Hanson to see that the bank clerks placed the cash in the vaults under his guard, and then instructed Miss Swanson to have the books and mortgage papers put away. He swung about in his chair to face Arnold.

"Issue a statement," he told the banker, "that the bank is in excellent condition, that Grogan's death had nothing to do with the bank or its affairs and that it will be open for business again tomorrow. Call the papers up now and I'll back up any statement you make along those lines."

When those details were taken care of, and a long distance call put in to the Bankers' Bonding Association for a detective, talk swung back to the dead man.

"Grogan didn't need any money," Arnold said positively. "I don't understand all this. He had a nice account here all the time. I don't understand it, that's all."

He was shocked. Not because of the twenty-five thousand dollars loss, for he would not have to make it good, but because he had liked Grogan and had seen him climb from office boy to cashier in twenty years' loyal and honest service to the bank.

"Grogan never spent money," he told Malone. "He wasn't married, as you know, and certainly the night

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life didn't attract him. His work at the church was so valuable that he became deacon and treasurer of the missionary funds.

"He always talked of his mother, who died six years ago. He didn't marry because, he explained, 'I can't find a girl like my mother.' "

Hanson returned from seeing the money replaced in the vaults and told Arnold that a search of the dead cashier's room revealed nothing that linked him with any enterprises that might have needed such a great amount of cash.

He further stated that detectives said that no "Mrs. LaBelle" lived at the address given on the back of the note, stating that his officers had found this to be a boarding house.

"My men are checking up on a woman named Francaise," he said, "who moved last night, but no one knew any Mrs. LaBelle."

Arnold was hardly seated at his desk the next morning when a Mrs. Pearson was ushered in. She was a woman in her early forties, and while not pretty, was well-dressed.

"I am Clara Pearson," she stated. "The Bankers' Bonding Association sent me here. Because of my many experiences in mysterious cases of this kind, the management felt that a woman operative, as the front or known detective, could do as well or better than a man. The odd circumstances made us feel that a quiet investigation was better."

Arnold explained that he had no leads to go on, but turned over to her the note on which his indorsement had been forged.

"It must have been a touch of insanity," the banker

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said. "And nothing would change my mind except for the fact of this note. However, it's up to you people. I have nothing to say that could help. Grogan was a church member, the funds of the missionary branch of the church are in perfect shape and his own account still has a balance of one thousand and fifty dollars."

Mrs. Pearson took the spurious note with her and left the bank.

Nothing transpired for several days and business slipped back into the normal routine.

Ten days later a check came for the twenty-five thousand dollars with an explanatory note that the detectives were on a hot trail which would lead to a satisfactory solution of why Grogan killed himself and just why the note had been forged.

Another week slipped by. Then Arnold received a telegram from Chicago, the home office of the bonding company, which read:

HAVE EVA MONTCLAIR, ALIAS EDNA FRANCAISE, ALIAS
ROSE LABELLE 1984 WISCONSIN AVENUE HELD ON
SHORT AFFIDAVIT ON CHARGE OF SUSPICION OF FRAUD
PENDING ARRIVAL YOUR CITY OUR OPERATORS.

He phoned Hanson to find and arrest the woman named in the wire, and waited the arrival of the private detectives. An hour later Hanson phoned that he had the woman in jail.

The detectives arrived the following morning and immediately saw the banker. They explained that Mrs. LaBelle was an alleged spirit medium, and that Mrs. Pearson had traced her to various cities from Waukee, which she had left the evening before Grogan's death, and had only returned the day of the wire.

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"It looked like the work of a fanatic," Mrs. Pearson explained to Arnold, "as soon as I heard that your cashier had been a church man and shunned the bright lights. Instead of making the case complicated, it made it easy for us.

"A search of Grogan's room revealed literature on spiritualism, together with several ten-cent store slates. This was proof that he had been dealing with some fortune teller who had assumed the guise of a medium for his especial benefit, or with a regular fake medium who was out to trim him.

"While the name LaBelle gave us no clew, the Francaise name helped, for an Edna Francaise had once been in trouble under the name of Eva Montclair, and that person was known to be in this part of the State. We got her photograph and description, and then traced the Francaise luggage. We found that she had gone to Des Moines, Iowa. We got there a day after she left. There we were lost until we picked up her path again, this time at Fort Dodge, Iowa, and then we followed her to Columbus. At Columbus we lost several days while I posed as a spiritualist, so I could be introduced to a maker of the fake apparatus used by spurious mediums.

"It was easy after I was taken in the circle to find Mrs. Montclair (to give her her own name), for we found she had returned here. We decided to give her a day or two here undisturbed to see if she had returned to 'hook' some one else or if she was coming back here to recover the missing money. But, when our shadow wired that she was wandering about Meadow Park, apparently looking for something, we decided to have her arrested; our belief is that she has the twenty-five thousand dollars buried there.

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"As she has committed absolutely no crime, our only hope is to frighten her so that she will return the money and tell us how she trapped Grogan.

"Legally here are the points. A woman brought stock as collateral to a bank. A loan was made on this stock. There is nothing technically wrong in that. It is up to the bank whether it makes a loan or not. In this case, the loan was made by a cashier, and had he not forged the initials on the back, the bonding company would not have been responsible under his bond. It could say that making the loan was merely an error in judgment. So, with nothing on the woman from any angle, it's up to us to try to recover the money and so scare her that she will leave town and quit this medium racket."

Arnold listened carefully to Mrs. Pearson, and agreed that it was lucky for the bank, and unlucky for the bonding company, that Grogan had forged the initials. He further agreed that prosecution was out of the question, that keeping the whole thing hushed up was best for the dead man's memory and for the community at large, but it would be fortunate for the bonding company if the money was recovered.

Therefore, the two detectives and the banker went to the County Building, in which city and county jails were housed, called on Chief Hanson, and gave him a summary of what they had discovered. Hanson had the prisoner sent for. She arrived in a defiant mood.

"What's the idea of all this?" she demanded. "I'm going to sue for false arrest."

"Oh, yeah," retorted Harris. "We dug up the money you planted in Meadow Park."

It was a bluff, but how it worked!

"My God!" the fake medium screamed.

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"We'll go easy on you if you'll tell us the whole story from beginning to end. If not, we intend to have you tried as an accessory in Grogan's death. We got the goods on you, and if you don't want to hang, you'd better come clean."

Another bluff, but it brought results again.

"I'll tell, I'll tell," came hysterically from the lips of the now totally unnerved woman.

Hanson summoned the police secretary, and started dictating:

"Whereas, I, Eva Montclair, alias Edna Francaise, alias Rose LaBelle, without threat or duress of any kind, knowing that anything I may say may be used against me in a court of law and trial by jury, but desiring to freely confess my wrongs, do hereby depose and affirm that——

"Now, Mrs. Montclair, you start from there."

"I met Mr. Grogan," the ex-medium said, "at a church affair to which I went hoping to meet some one whom I could interest in any sort of racket that would bring me money. Mr. Grogan was a sort of introducer of strangers, and when he saw me alone, came over to me and explained who he was. He introduced me to many people, but when I heard he was cashier of a bank, I played up to him.

"He seemed to have no interest in women. He seemed to be interested in the church only. So I explained that I was a widow and needed a Christian influence. This got him and I seemed to be getting in his favor. When we parted that night he told me to meet him at the Sunday services and that he'd get me a pew down front.

"Of course, I went, and for the next several days I saw him regularly. I told him that I had met a spirit

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medium who brought me messages from my dead husband, and that I was taking up spiritualism. This interested him very much, because his mother was dead, and he wanted to know if he could get in communication with her. I said I thought he could, and that I'd ask the medium.

"Of course, there was no medium, I just played along with him getting him interested. One Sunday, after his own church services, I told him that the medium had left town, but had taught me so much of her creed that I was now getting messages direct from spirits myself. I invited him to my house that night, and he came.

"I worked a few simple slate tricks * and he was much impressed. I then did a few stunts with message readings,** and finally let him have some literature on genuine spiritualism. I got Grogan all worked up about combining spiritualism with his own creeds. Things went on nicely for a few days, with me telling him about how fine it would be if he were to become a leader in a great new religion.

"A day or two after I first suggested forming a new religion, he said that he would go into it with me if I got an approval message for him from his mother in spirit. So I said we would try.

"The people that I was boarding with were very strict, and while I got away with the slate writing stunts in their parlor, I knew that if I were to do any tricks with big apparatus I'd have to have a larger place, one all to myself, so I rented the cellar of a nearby house. I won't tell where. These people were honest, decent folks, and didn't know I was putting over a 'fast deal.' I got hold

* See chapter XII where details of slate manipulations are explained.

** See chapter XIII for methods of message reading.

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of a carpenter and had him build me a 'medium's post.' It's called that because it's a handy piece of apparatus for mediums to have.

"I'll take you where I threw it after I used it, and you can examine it for yourself.

"This carpenter made it for me in a day and even erected it in the center of the cellar I had rented. The people who owned the house must have thought I was crazy. I told the carpenter the post was for a scientific experiment.

"Well, Grogan came to the cellar. I told him to tie me to the post, which seemed absolutely rigid and solid, place a screen about me and the post, and then 'see what would happen.'

"It was almost funny to watch him tie me. He seemed afraid even to touch me. He was afraid. But anyway, he got me tied up securely and put the screen around me.

"He then turned out the lights, and the place was in utter darkness. It was even spooky to me, who knew it was all a trick. It must have raised his hair. No matter how unemotional one may be, the combination of darkness and the sound of unknown things, suggestions of the presence of spirits, are bound to rouse fear.

"As soon as the lights were out, tambourines began to move over the top of the screen, outlined luminously, ghostly hands began to show and low murmurings could be heard. This got Grogan and he asked, 'Mother, do you hear me?'

"There was silence for a moment, and then I answered in a low sepulchral tone, 'Yes, my boy. What can I do for you?' He then asked about the new religion, but before I answered in his mother's name, I played a tune on a guitar, which I had concealed with other apparatus

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in a small closet convenient to the post. I finally got down to business. I felt he was now in a mood to be sold. I certainly did have spirit hands and faces moving about the room.

"He told his mother that he'd help get the new religion started, and I put the instruments and things back in the closet. He turned up the lights and removed the screen. I seemed to be in a dead faint, tied up exactly as I was when the seance started.

"The following day I got some stock I'd bought some years ago out of my trunk and took it to the bank. Grogan had me sign a note and put up the collateral. He then gave me twenty-five thousand dollars in small bills so they couldn't be traced, and I was supposed to give fifteen thousand dollars of this money at once to Quimbly, the contractor, who was to start work on a small church for me at once. Grogan and I signed a partnership agreement, which I'll show you, and I was all set.

"I talked it over with a shyster lawyer I phoned later that day, and he said that I'd done no wrong, as all I had done was to sign a note. I got cold feet anyway and began to travel about town looking for a place to hide the satchel in which I'd put the money. I found that place near the willow tree opposite Grant's monument, hid it, and left town."

Chief Hanson rose and left the room.

"Then I came back, and have been looking for an opportunity to dig it up and vanish. But I guess the game is up. You found the money and that's that. Now, how light a sentence do I get? I'm really sorry Grogan killed himself, but I certainly never thought it would come to

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that. I thought I could trim him and he'd never feel the loss of the money."

Harris started asking questions.

"If Grogan tied you how did you get free and what is this 'medium's post' you mention?"

"I'll show you the post and explain how it works when you see it. It's a mechanical device that permits a medium the use of his or her hands."

"Did Grogan come to you the day before his death and ask for the return of the bank's money?"

"No, he came and explained the bank examiner was coming and that there might be a question raised about the note. He said that I should say the collateral was worth all I said it was if questioned."

Hanson returned, and took Harris aside.

"The car squad just phoned they found the money intact in Meadow Park just where she said it had been planted," the chief said. "They are on the way here now with it."

"Good," Harris ejaculated. Turning to the medium he ordered: "Show us where this medium's post is located, and explain what it is and how it works."

The woman shrugged, and with the men got into the police department touring car. They drove some distance out of the city and finally came to a little used side road, where the fake medium told them to stop. In a ditch was what seemed to be a solid piece of wood about two feet square and five feet long. Pieces of rope dangled out of the top.

"That's a mighty heavy piece of wood," Hanson said.

The medium smiled. "It weighs about fifteen pounds."

With an incredulous expression, Chief Hanson bent and grasped one end of the post. He braced his feet, to

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lift, and the post came up with such ease that the effort he had placed behind the lift almost upset him.

"It's as light as a feather!"

"It is bolted to a floor," said the pseudo-medium. "There are braces at the bottom. The post is hollow."

Hanson told the chauffeur to get a heavy wrench from the car and break in the wooden sides. And the secret of the medium's post was exposed.

Inside the hollow post was a sliding piece of iron to which were attached four strands of rope, which led out of the post at holes in the top, two strands through each hole. In one side of the iron was a groove. A bolt which seemingly was used to fasten the brace at the bottom, actually controlled a ratchet in the bottom and another in the top of the post. Study the illustration on page 235.

While the medium was letting herself be tied to the post, the iron was at the bottom, held there by the ratchet, thus holding the ends of the rope taut and making it appear that that was all the rope there was.

After the medium was tied, the screen placed around her and the lights put out, she had simply to release the ratchet, pull up the iron by drawing her hands back and away from the post, thus obtaining about four feet of play. The ratchet in the top (which is not shown in the illustration) held the iron there while she performed her tricks.

Whereupon she released the top ratchet, let the iron slide down inside the post taking in the rope again and making it appear once more that she was securely and closely tied.

The play the rope gave her allowed her to reach into the closet, get the guitar and tambourine and play them,

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and effect the other illusions which she had used to impress Grogan.

There was the slimmest possibility of convicting the fake medium on a charge of accessory to a fraud, which would mean exposing Grogan's forgery in court, something to which Arnold would not agree, and a still slimmer possibility of getting a conviction on a charge of obtaining money under false pretenses. But this again would involve Grogan.

The detectives for the bonding association took Hanson and Arnold aside, and talked this end over again.

"The money is intact, so all we are out is the traveling expenses and our salaries," Harris said. "A court fight to get a conviction would unearth our methods of working, and also expose Grogan. No one is the loser except Grogan, who is dead. No charge I can think of will stick. We better be satisfied to run this woman out of town."

They agreed, and Hanson confronted her.

"Mrs. Montclair," the chief stated, "we could hold you on a charge of being accessory to a murder, but because you have been so frank with us, and because we have the twenty-five thousand dollars intact, we do not intend to prosecute."

The medium's face lighted up.

"You mean, I'm free?" she exclaimed.

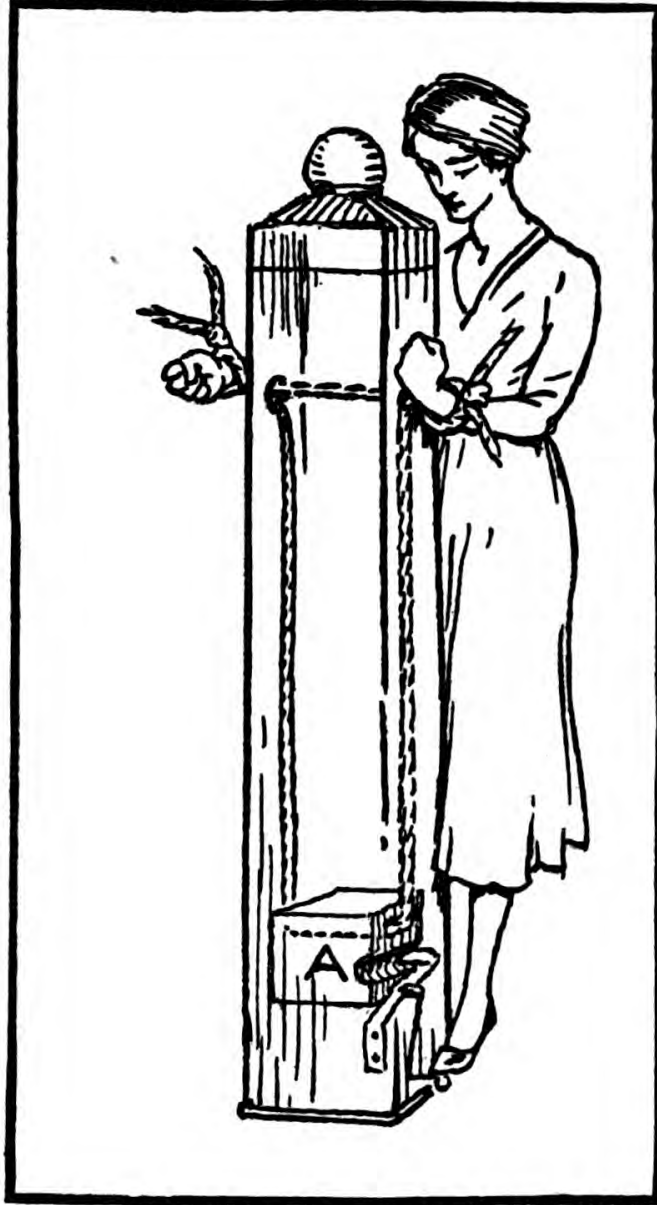
"Not so fast. If you promise to quit the fake medium racket we won't hold you. But, don't forget, we have your confession, and if we ever hear of your working a stunt like this again, we'll turn this confession over to the police of any town where you're caught. Get out of this town right away. If you ever come back you'll be immediately arrested."

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From that day to this the truth of why a bank cashier in a town of fourteen thousand people in the Middle West killed himself has never been known.

THE FAKE MEDIUM POST

The Medium runs ropes through the post (which is hollow). Ropes pass through weight "A," which is then dropped, bringing ropes down too. The medium, tied, frees herself by releasing weight at the bottom (operating the catch with her foot)—then, by lifting the weight, there is ample slack to release her wrists. The weight "A" can be held at the top or the bottom of the post by mechanism operated with foot.



CHAPTER XI

BUNKING BROKERS AND OTHERS

ON a floor of a mid-town building in New York is a great organization doing a business running into hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly—even in these hard times. The head of it we will call Miss Smith.

The stock of the organization is other people's belief that the planets exercise an influence over their lives. Gullibility plays a great part in its success. Bunk plays even a greater part. Bunk and the gift of mixing planets, stars and fancy names—and the gift of gab.

Miss Smith's business?

"Star Gazer" is one name for it. Reading the future through positions of the stars. Doing all the things the bearded, cone-hatted diviners of the Middle Ages did before her, yet doing them so efficiently and gracefully that money flows in streams into her coffers.

Fully in keeping with the building which houses her establishment, her outer office is a model of the interior decorator's art. It impresses even the wealthy stock brokers who patronize her. Here comes a client. The slim, beautifully gowned young lady at the reception desk glides forward. She is certainly charming.

"I am a broker," he introduces himself. "I have some inside information on a certain stock, but I might be double crossed in a stock market as uncertain as this. Some men want me to come into a pool with them. I am

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anxious to go in, and also anxious to stay out. It may be that Miss Smith can help me come to a decision."

"Certainly," replies the reception girl with a smile that is charming. "She can do that by reading the stars, by finding out if the planets are in a favorable position for you. Simply let me have your name and address and I'll arrange an appointment with Miss Smith.

"The fee for a single service is only one hundred dollars, for a consultation. The monthly fee is two hundred dollars, or two thousand four hundred dollars yearly, for which Miss Smith will mail you a complete monthly forecast on the first of every month."

"Let me see how much Miss Smith tells me on this first visit and I'll discuss the monthly arrangement later," the broker visitor smilingly agrees.

"Very well," the girl says as she picks up a beautiful gold appointment book and runs her blue eyes down the page. "You are lucky. It's now about nine forty-five and I see Miss Smith has an opening at ten forty-five. If you'll wait for her, I'll put your name down."

The broker agrees to wait and pays over two crisp fifty-dollar bills from a well-filled wallet. He is taken to another office; small, yet luxuriously furnished, is given a comfortable chair and some copies of financial magazines to read. The reception girl returns at the moment of ten forty-five, and ushers the broker into one of the most striking offices he has ever seen.

It is a room almost forty feet long and twenty-five feet wide, with walls magnificently paneled and hand carved. In the center is a table, massive and impressive. On one end of it is a giant globe on a huge swivel. Painted on this globe are the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

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Suspended over it is a disk on which are arranged planets and stars which can be moved at will.

As the broker enters the room a stately woman of uncertain age rises to greet him. He is introduced to Portentia Smith. He is frankly skeptical. He is asked the month of his birth. He gives it, and Miss Smith arranges her globe and disk. She says, with eyes that never leave his, and in words which never falter:

"According to the stars you are married to a woman named Elizabeth. She is slightly younger than you. Your children are seven and ten, the younger being a boy and the elder a girl. Their names are Harold and Betty. You own a Packard automobile."

The broker can hardly believe his ears. Every word is true. Miss Smith says that she is now ready for any question he cares to ask, that she has given these facts about himself merely to show she possesses the power to make the stars reveal facts to her.

"Miss Smith," he commences, "I'd heard a great deal about you, but your reputation does not even do you justice. Before we go any further, let me give you a retainer for the monthly service your assistant suggested."

Raising her left hand on which reposes a remarkable emerald held in place by a platinum band engraved with the planets, in each of which are inserted star-shaped diamonds of richest blue white brilliance, Miss Smith smilingly rejects his offer, advising him that business matters involving money are not of interest to her and that he should see the cashier on the way out. This further impresses the visitor, who asks:

"Miss Smith, I have a chance to get a pool by buying five thousand shares of Blank stock three points below

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the market. I like the stock, but frankly I am afraid of the crowd in the pool with me. I want your advice."

The star gazer takes a piece of paper on which are drawn stars, makes astronomical designs on it, compares the signs of the Zodiac governing his birth month, and the present month, arranges the planets on the overhanging disk, does what seems to her visitor some higher mathematical problems, and then gives her decision.

"This deal is a bad one for you. The overhanging dark clouds obscure the brighter ones for you just now. The stars are not right for your immediate success, and generally I advise you to leave the deal alone."

Miss Smith arises, signifying the interview is over.

The pool in which the broker had been invited to participate is formed without him, the European situation grows worse, the market falls and Miss Smith has a "client" who firmly believes her advice because she saved him at least \$100,000.

Any one reading the true incident above might have his faith in fortune tellers strengthened or revived, but, wait. The day prior to the visit of our lucky stock broker friend, Miss Smith had been consulted by another broker. This broker had the same story to tell. He wanted to go in the pool to buy Blank stock, but he, too, was afraid of double cross.

After her usual rigmarole Miss Smith advised him to *go* into the pool. One broker had to win—one had to lose!

She would get one steadfast client out of it, no matter what happened.

* * * *

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II

The believer in astrology may say:

"All right, we'll admit Miss Smith made a mistake on the advice she gave the first broker—but *she* didn't make the error. She simply read the stars, and if *they* gave her the wrong information, and the first broker's 'control stars' indicated success when it didn't come, you can't blame Miss Smith. Also, if Miss Smith is not genuinely able to read stars, how did she know the names of the broker's wife and children, and their ages?"

Here the believer grins all over. He certainly has the skeptic stopped now.

No, he hasn't, for the method Miss Smith used to obtain her information is one that has been in use by fortune tellers since telephones were invented.

What happened was this. When the broker gave his name to the reception girl he started a chain of investigation into his whole life. The first step the girl took after putting him in a private office was to telephone the broker's office, explain that she was with such and such a newspaper and wanted Mrs. Broker's home telephone number. The unsuspecting operator at the other end promptly gave the number.

The reception girl then phoned Mrs. Blank and stated that she was the such and such photographic studio and that the rotogravure section of a newspaper had requested her to make an appointment to photograph her with her children. She then asked and obtained Mrs. Broker's maiden name, her children's names and ages.

Then she asked Mrs. Broker if she could have the photographer picture them in the family automobile. Obviously the next question brought out the name of the

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car. This information the assistant gave Miss Smith, who was then ready for the "consultation."

The following day probably pictures were taken, to avoid the possibility of Mr. Broker of even suspecting anything. If he hadn't signed up for the year's service, no photographer would call. Miss Smith had the hundred dollar fee, and it wouldn't make much difference whether Mr. Broker suspected or not.

There's another ramification of the picture-making angle. Suppose one of Mr. Broker's children, or wife, died within a year or two, or while he was a client of the soothsayer. It would be a simple matter to give a fake medium one of the pictures taken (no proof of which was ever shown the family), and later have a "spirit photo" reproduced for Mr. Broker at some huge price.

III

Helen Nolan was a rabid radio fan. She listened in every spare moment. She was in her early thirties, unmarried, a school-teacher with much time to herself as she rarely went out, and lived in Los Angeles.

Early in 1930 she heard a certain astrologer give a talk on the radio about the stars and their positions. He invited the listeners to give the date of their births, and mail them to him for a "free reading." Miss Nolan sent for everything offered on the air, whether it was baby food or literature on the latest automobile. She wrote the astrologer, giving her birthday.

A few days later she received a reply which was most vague, although it did give certain characteristics that Miss Nolan felt were hers. Inclosed with the letter from the astrologer was an offer to send a complete horoscope

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to her for one dollar. It would give a complete history of all those born on the same day, as well as a complete analysis of character. As an added inducement, a dream book would be sent free, which would explain in detail anything that the reader ever dreamed.

Miss Nolan hastened to send the dollar. Within a short time the dream book and the horoscope came. Miss Nolan carefully studied it, and found that, according to the book, she was totally unfitted for teaching school. And even though she had been in the school system for thirteen years, because the horoscope told her that she was cut out to be an actress she resigned her position within a month after receiving the book!

She registered at the casting office which supplies Hollywood motion picture studios as a "type," and waited over four months before she was even called for a test. Elated at what she called her "success," she made an appointment to see the astrologist personally. After paying a fee of one hundred dollars she was ushered into his presence.

After studying the signs of the Zodiac, and deliberating for some time, he asked her if she had any inclination to act. Miss Nolan earnestly assured him that she had. The stars were right and the seer began to outline her great future.

Although Miss Nolan did not hear from her screen test she kept going back faithfully to the astrologer for private readings. He continued to tell her that she would be successful, and to have patience.

Several months had passed from the time she had resigned her position as a teacher. The constant drain on her resources had practically beggared her, and the constant strain on her mentality had gradually broken

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down her health. The principal of her former school saw her one day on the street. Aghast at her apparent ill health, the principal stopped and questioned Miss Nolan.

She poured out the story of her attempt to become an actress and the part the astrologist had played. The principal immediately took action. He reported the case to the district attorney, but it brought no action, because astrologists assert that their predictions are based on absolute science, quoting the fact that the United States Government employs astronomers and that "the work is similar"—a ridiculous claim.

The principal, however, took such an aggressive stand against the broadcasting station that the station banned the astrologer.

Miss Nolan left for the back hills of California, where she stayed several months recuperating. On her return to the city she started a campaign against all seers and soothsayers which proved most successful.

It is a known fact that in the movie settlements on the West Coast fortune tellers find a most fertile field. Cases are being reported constantly, involving film players, and were the names to be made public movie goers would be shocked and amazed.

The author and Messrs. Davids and Herman were talking recently about the broadcasting methods of seers, and the case of Miss Nolan came up. They stated that there were hundreds of such cases yearly, some worse, in which the victim actually lost all sense of judgment.

The horoscope "racket" is a most profitable source of revenue for the fakers. One astrologer of whom I am thinking, it may not be the one Miss Nolan heard, received over one hundred thousand letters in response to his radio "free reading" offer. To all he sent the same

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letter referring to the one dollar horoscope book, with the dream book thrown in. Out of this one hundred thousand more than thirty-one thousand letters were received inclosing the dollar! Think of it, thirty per cent of his listeners fell for the proposition!

The horoscopes for which he gets a dollar cost him in Columbus the huge sum of three cents each. The dream book costs but one cent. As the one who asks for the "free reading" must inclose a self-addressed envelope, it costs nothing for addressing or mailing the dollar offer. The mailing of the dream book and horoscope costs three cents. So for the dollar he receives he has only seven cents expenses. It's a nice business!

A magician told me he saw in this Columbus supply house a list of one thousand fortune tellers who use from fifty to one hundred thousand horoscopes regularly. This dealer handles so-called occult literature and apparatus. Here he learned that fashions in fortune telling change like fashions in hats, but the principle of it all is just the same—"Kid the public and get the money."

IV

Scientists and astronomers of international repute have publicly gone on record that astrology is not based on scientific principles and that the planets and stars do not and can not possibly exert any influence on the welfare, happiness, character or future of any individual.

The Smithsonian Institute in its pronouncement of July 31, 1931, part of which has been used elsewhere in this book, was emphatic in its cold scientific statement to the author that futures could not be predicted. Signed by Dr. C. G. Abbot, secretary of the United States government operated institute, the statement in full reads:

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"The Smithsonian Institute has no evidence which it considers to prove that the fortunes of individuals can be told by fortune tellers, astrologers or spirit mediums.

"The Institute believes that the fortunes of individuals primarily depend on their own exertions and secondly on the influence of future environment, and in general are not predictable."

"Popular Science Monthly," a magazine of unquestioned authority, now edited by Raymond J. Brown, a noted scientist, commissioned Jesse F. Gelders, a writer of repute, to ask a selected group of recognized astronomers and physicists whose life work had been spent in a study of the stars in an attempt to pierce the mysteries of the universe, whether or not there was anything to astrology—and if it was a science.

The group included Professor Frank Schlesinger, of the department of astronomy at Yale University; Daniel W. Hering, professor emeritus of physics at New York University; Professor E. W. Brown of the department of astronomy of Yale, and president of the American Astronomical Society; Dr. Clyde Fisher, curator of astronomy of the American Museum of Natural History, and president of the Amateur Astronomers' Association; Dr. D. Brouwer, of the department of astronomy at Yale; Professor Henry Norris Russell and Professor John Stewart, of the department of astronomy at Princeton; Professor George P. Pegram, of the department of physics at Columbia, and W. J. Eckert, instructor in astronomy at Columbia.

By the courtesy and permission of "Popular Science Monthly," I am reprinting some startling proofs of why scientists all call astrology a fake and a fraud:—

"These men of science are unanimous in declaring that there is no scientific basis whatever for the deductions and predictions

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made by astrologers, and that there are no known forces or influences such as the astrologers ascribe to the stars and planets.

"It is just as impossible to foretell the future by gazing at the stars as it is by peering at a mess of tea leaves or shuffling a deck of cards.

"Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, Research officer of the Boston Society of Psychic Research, recently induced a friend to send the year, day, and minute of birth to six different astrologers, inclosing a fee for a horoscope.

"The six replies were all different and all wrong. We asked each, 'Shall I marry this year?' Not one learned from the stars that the man was already married. In all social, matrimonial, and business matters the racketeer star gazers guessed ninety percent wrong.

"Professor Schlesinger, of Yale, voiced the opinion of the scientists when he expressed himself to the effect that astrology, as most astrologers know, is the bunk.

" 'If there were any basis for astrology, astronomers would be very glad to know of it,' he told me. 'Some of us have gone into it. I have, and I have come to the conclusion that there is no basis for its claims. I believe that most astrologers are conscious charlatans. A few of them are sincere.

" 'Most of them ask the client only what day he was born. Now, thousands of people are born every day. Yet, they have different characteristics, and lead very different lives.

" 'A few astrologers want to know the exact minute of birth. Of course, very few people are able to give them that information. It so happened that I did know the exact minute of my son's birth. I decided to test the 'Knowledge' of one of these 'precise' astrologers, and sent him the information. The horoscope I received in return was no more accurate than if a cat had cast it.

"Professor Emeritus Hering, of New York University, also has made a personal investigation of astrology. Two words sufficed him to characterize it. He found it 'inconsistent and absurd.'

"An open-minded examination of the radio astrologers' activities (until the Federal Radio commission stopped the nonsense to

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a great extent) by any intelligent person will prove the truth of Professor Schlesinger's and Professor Hering's statements.

"Their own methods and utterances branded the astrologers as 'conscious charlatans' whose conclusions and predictions are inconsistent and absurd!

"This is how many of them worked their game:

"Horoscopes were sent in return for the wrappers of advertised products. Replies were given to questions: and 'destiny charts' and tabulations of 'favorable and unfavorable hours' were sold for sums of one to ten dollars. Wonder books were offered for sale that promised to give 'accurate answers and conclusions to all of your problems' and 'help to physicians in their diagnoses'!

"Some of the curious pronouncements of these prophets over the air are funny! Read some:

"'I have been in love with a young man, born May 4th, for four years,' " one astrologer, in his broadcast, read from a letter sent in by a client. "'My birthday is March 8th.' "

"The astrologer cleared his throat and said, 'His birth sign indicts lack of interest and fickleness.' That finishes the chap who was born on the 4th of May.

"Next he read a note appealing for help in a matter of business.

"'We want to sell our house. Is a favorable sale indicated?' " the letter asked. The astrologer has been in conference with the planets, and knows the answer. "'In the June or July transit,' " he predicted.

"'Sally of the Bronx,' another client, who writes her birthday is August 21st, though the year remains a secret, is told that church-bells will chime and orange blossoms will bloom for her in the last quarter of 1933. Who minds waiting a couple of years for a sure thing?

"Listen to this statement from a sooth-sayer of the air who as yet has not been silenced by the proper authorities:

"'Astrology is an exact science. We can tell with precision exactly what you can expect.'

"This is a gross and dangerous falsehood. Astrology is NOT

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an exact science. It is not a science at all. And an astrologer can no more foretell the future than can you or I. The stars and the planets 'have nothing to do with the case.' ”

Writing from the Mt. Wilson Observatory, Prof. Russell wrote the author :

“Popular Science Monthly quotation from me correct, and I heartily sympathize with attitude you have taken that astrology does not foretell the future.”

Prof. Samuel C. Hooker, Doctor of Philosophy, a man of unimpeachable standing in the scientific world made the following statement to the author:—

“I am personally convinced that astrology, as now practised, is carried on with the knowledge that it has no foundation whatever in fact, and that the recent books having reference to it have been written with that knowledge. In my opinion astrologists should not be permitted to broadcast, as a great deal of harm can be done in this way to uneducated listeners. It is, of course, possible that there may be some, who are practising astrology, who have been misled by fraudulent writings which they are taking as their guide.”

Sir James Jeans, one of the greatest living astronomers, in one of his recent books “The Universe About Us” sums up astrology as being “dead” among astronomers. He states :

“At first astronomy, like other sciences, was studied for mainly utilitarian reasons. It provided measures of time, and enabled mankind to find its way. . . . In the guise of astrology, it held out hopes of telling him his future. . . . Where the astrologers went wrong was in supposing that terrestrial empires, kings and individuals formed such important items in the scheme of the

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universe that the motions of the heavenly bodies could be intimately bound up with their fates. As soon as man began to realize his own insignificance, astrology died an instant, natural and inevitable death."

And if after reading this chapter, you still believe astrologists can foretell your future, you'd better pass this book on to a friend.



CHAPTER XII

SPIRIT SLATES

MARY SHANE had been a widow but a few short days when, as she later put it, "an iligant lady" drove up to her home, a cozy little, vine-covered cottage in that part of Chicago known as "Irishtown." The visitor, exquisitely dressed in black, introduced herself as "Mrs. Martin," and was more than sympathetic in expressing her deep sympathy on Mrs. Shane's bereavement.

After explaining that she, too, was recently widowed, Mrs. Martin stated:

"It's an odd errand, a rather queer one, Mrs. Shane, that brings me here today. Last night at Madame M——'s you know, the great spirit medium—when I was getting a message through her from the spirit world and my dear departed husband, a new spirit intruded into our talk. He said he was Tim Shane, and that he lived in this house when on earth. He told us all about you, so I've looked you up."

As Mrs. Shane was hardly over the hysteria death brings to some people, any news of her late husband, no matter how strange and no matter how foreign to her thoughts and beliefs, was welcome. Hence, she was most receptive to her visitor's talk. And Mrs. Martin began to tell of various personal incidents in the life of the Shanes that Mary thought no one could know but her late husband.

"No one not in the spirit world could know these

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things about you and your husband, could they?" queried Mrs. Martin.

"Not a soul," answered Mrs. Shane, wide-eyed, and she begged Mrs. Martin to take her to Madame M——. Mrs. Martin would be happy to.

In a flurry of nervous excitement, Mrs. Shane got in Mrs. Martin's handsome sedan. En route, Mrs. Martin cautioned her not to say that she was Mrs. Shane, but to find out if Madame's "guiding spirit" would reveal the fact of her identity.

On arriving at the home of the medium, Mary was shown into a room that was utterly bare save for a kitchen table, two chairs, and a low-burning oil lamp which cast a ghastly shadow over the entire room.

The table was pushed back against the wall, near a pair of heavy purple curtains. Against the curtains was one of the chairs, and directly opposite was the other. There was a strange and weird atmosphere about the room. There was the musk of exotic perfume. Not a sound could be heard. The silence of death prevailed. The whole setting gave off a singular feeling of fear which was imparted to the trembling visitor—a fantastic fear of the unknown and unseen.

A rubber-soled maid, or attendant, directed Mary to sit on the chair at the end of the table nearest the curtains. "Madame M—— will be here directly," she murmured. "Have patience. Be not afraid." Mary waited apprehensively, and a few seconds after she had almost fallen into the seat, and before she was able to calm herself, she was startled to see a woman enter garbed in the traditional white flowing robes which mediums have affected since those days in the early fifties of the last century, when spiritualism first came into vogue.

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The medium sat in the chair opposite Mary, took both her hands and looked into her eyes. In a deep, almost sepulchral monotone, devoid of inflection, she declaimed.

"I know you, my dear. You are Mary Shane. I saw you in a trance last night. Your husband's spirit spoke to me. Your maiden name was O'Hare. You and Tim met for the first time at a dance they gave at Easter. Be of good faith. Do not doubt."

For fully five minutes, Madame M—— spoke in the awe-inspiring voice, spoke of Mary's and Tim's life, the loss of their only child, until the very marrow in Mary's bones seemed frozen.

In creepy tones, the medium continued:

"Take this slate. Then this water. Wash it well. Then place it in front of you. Now, take this pad of paper. While I prepare for the trance in which I must go to receive messages from the spirit world, write any three messages you want to send to Tim. Then tear off the sheet, fold it three times, and hold it tightly. No one but you must know what you have written there."

With this Madame M—— left the room silently, like a ghost, as Mary prepared to write. With trembling fingers she penned her questions to her late husband. She had finished writing but a few seconds when the medium returned as silently as she had gone, carrying with her a lighted candle carefully centered in what appeared to be an ordinary cheap candle holder.

Seated at the table, she asked Mary for the message, which was promptly, nervously handed over, folded three times. The medium then asked if any one had seen her write. "N-no," Mary stuttered; whereupon the

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medium held the paper to the flame of the burning candle, chanting:

"Oh, great spirit guide, oh my Indian control, to you I send on wings of flame this word to one of the dear departed. Take from the smoke as it goes upward toward heaven the message from the earth-bound."

Much as a snake, hypnotizing before it strikes, the medium stared at Mary, held her entranced. She turned the oil lamp down until it gave but a flicker. Then she placed the candle on a shelf so its dim light made her appear ethereal, unreal in her white robe. She took up the slate. A minute of silence. Then:

"Have you washed the slate?" she asked. Mary nodded dumbly. "Then, look. On it I write your name. Place your hands above your head. I put the slate in them. Hold the slate tightly. Do not take it down until I tell you. Now, I go into a trance."

With this she swung from side to side, muttering and chanting unintelligible words. Suddenly she was still for a second. Then, amidst moans and groans, as beads of perspiration ran down her face, she asked:

"Have you answered, great Lo, my Indian Spirit guide? . . . You have? . . . Then all is well."

With a start, she awoke from her trance, blinking her piercing eyes, and pinching the skin about her temples.

"Take your hands down," she ordered Mary. "See if the spirit brought you word from Tim."

Mary, trembling, looked at the slate as the medium slowly turned the meagre light of the lamp higher. There, sure enough, on the slate she had held tightly grasped in her hands, was a message, "in Tim's own handwriting," she later said.

The message read:

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I am well and happy here in spirit land. Do not mourn. Come to-morrow and I will talk with you. Do not pay off the mortgage. Keep the \$6,000 insurance money intact. I miss you, but am with you.

Madame M——, by this time fully recovered from her trance, then asked what the message had been which Mary had written. Mary explained she had asked Tim if he were happy, whether she should pay off the mortgage, and if he missed her. She was ecstatic.

"Saints be praised!" she cried. "Blessed Mother, I thank you!"

II

Mary soon became a steady visitor to Madame M——. No fee was ever charged, for, as the medium expressed it, "I do this out of love for my fellow people." Mary's attendance at the Church of the Ascension dropped off. She lived in a state of ecstasy. She told her neighbors of her experiences, and elaborated upon them:

"Faith, and it's true. I write on a piece of paper. Sometimes Madame M—— burns it up and sometimes I do: She never even touches it. Writing appears on a slate I wash, in Tim's own handwriting. Sometimes, 'specially when Madame M—— does not even touch the paper, the guide puts Tim's answers to my questions right in her own mouth. 'Tis a miracle."

Three weeks of steady visits instilled in Mary a confidence in the medium that Father S. J. Flannery couldn't shake, when, after Mary's repeated absences from church, he called to see if she were ill. The priest did his best to show how impossible it all was, but she stubbornly insisted: "'Tis a miracle."

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Came a time, only two days after the priest's visit, when Madame M—— sent her maid to tell Mary to come at once about a "special message." Rushing to the medium's home, Mary found Madame M—— garbed in the flowing robes in which she had originally seen her, but this time she was rolling on the floor with foam rushing from her mouth, as she muttered in agony:

"I've sent for her! I've sent for her! Tell me, Tim, dear departed, before you fade away, what it is. Oil? In the lamp? No?—then again speak. I do not understand."

Mary stood spellbound and speechless before the spectacle. Her horror was as intense as her wonder. She had been warned that she should never say a word while the medium was in a "foaming" trance. Mary could not understand the medium's words for a moment, then, she heard:

"In the land is oil—not in the lamp! Yes, yes, I understand! Go on! Where is this oil? What is it? Golden dollars flowing? Wealth appearing? For who? For your Mary! Yes, I know! I'll tell her. Where is this oil? In Oklahoma. Yes, where? In Ardmore. Yes, yes. What is the name of the company? The Shaft Oil Wells. Yes, yes. I'll tell her!"

Minutes more of this. Then, with a shout the medium fell in a faint. She was quickly revived when Mary fanned her with a newspaper. Wiping the foam from her mouth, she asked Mary what had happened. Mary told her, and the medium said she'd never heard of the Shaft Oil Company, but would investigate.

The following day she sent her maid for Mary, who came in a taxi—a great extravagance for her. Madame M—— said that she had carefully investigated the com-

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pany, and had all the details. But before Mary invested, she said, she would go in another trance and ask Tim's further advice. This she did at once, and while in the trance she stated that Tim had sent the message that she should invest her \$6,000 insurance money.

Mary immediately went to the bank and withdrew the funds in small bills, as she had been instructed. Madame M—— gave her one thousand shares of Shaft Oil Company in exchange, telling her she was on the road to millions, of which she wanted no part herself. She only wanted to be thought of as the messenger of the spirits.

III

Months went by. Mary became more and more impatient and less credulous as no returns came in from the oil wells. Finally she turned back to the church of her birth for advice. Father Flannery went to the First National Bank, where he learned there was no company of the name of Shaft, and that within two weeks half a dozen people had asked about the outfit.

The priest then went to Madame M—— and demanded the return of Mary's money. He was told to come again that night, when it would be returned. Had he turned back as he left the porch the malignant expression of the medium would have warned him not to let Madame M—— escape.

On his way back to Mary's he bethought himself of a parishioner, Detective Captain O'Brien, and changed his route, going to the police station. There he unburdened his story.

Captain O'Brien heard him patiently, then said he had many complaints against Madame M——, but could do

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nothing because no one would sign the necessary complaint on which to issue a warrant. Father Flannery sent a message to Mary to come to the police station. On her arrival, he persuaded her to make the formal complaint. This done, Captain O'Brien and two of his men set out for the home of Madame M——.

They rang the bell. No one answered, and finally they broke down the door. There were signs of hasty packing—and the bird had flown.

The newspaper publicity which followed brought dozens of victims to light, including a noted attorney's widow. Facts proved that in eleven months the medium had obtained \$142,000 for stock in a company that did not exist.

* * * *

The methods used by Madame M—— were very simple.

Obviously Mrs. Martin was a "capper," or in commercial parlance a "salesman" for the medium. The name of Mrs. Shane had been obtained from the death notices in the local newspapers. Incidentally, these death columns bring live leads to many workers of nefarious rackets. (See Chapter II.)

After Mrs. Martin picked Mrs. Shane as a possible victim, she visited neighbors, friends and near-by storekeepers for information on the prospect. Putting all this information together, she and the medium worked out the sales talk to be used on Mrs. Shane. The information Mrs. Shane thought no one but her husband and herself knew, was common gossip. It made the foundation on which Madame M—— built Mrs. Shane's confidence in her.

As to the actual workings in the medium's parlor, the

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simplest tricks of a magician were invoked. Practically all mediums operate in dimly lighted rooms, for they state the spirits dread the light. The actual reason for the darkness is simple. Most people since childhood have been afraid of the dark, and the weird effect of the bleak darkness overshadows some of the crude sleight-of-hand or trick moves that the medium makes.

The foam in the medium's mouth, as explained in Chapter VI is easily produced by a small piece of soap.

The burning of the message was a case of sleight-of-hand. The candle holder that the medium used had a cut-out base with clip. (See illustration lower left corner, page 259.)

When Mrs. Shane folded her message three times in the manner the medium described, and gave it to Madame M——, the medium hid or palmed the real message and substituted a blank piece of paper folded the same way. Then, while Madame M—— talked to divert Mrs. Shane's attention, she slid the real message in the bottom of the candle holder. If you recall, Madame M—— placed the candle and holder on a shelf. Back of this shelf was a sliding panel. An assistant took out the message, read it, wrote an answer on a slate he had, one exactly like the one Mary washed, and when the medium put the slate over Mrs. Shane's head, made a simple substitution. (The illustration on page 259 shows the simplicity of this move.)

It so happened that Mrs. Shane's questions gave the medium just the information she wanted. Had they not, another day would have come in which one of the answers to a question could have been, "Don't invest the insurance money." Mrs. Martin had probably found out from neighbors just what the amount was.

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When Madame M—— changed her method of working, and “never touched the paper on which the questions were written,” she used a most common trick.

The tablet she gave Mary contained four or five pieces of paper. The bottom piece was prepared with wax. This



“SPIRIT SLATES” AREN’T!

Scientists state that spirits are bodiless. The diagram illustrated herewith indicates the famous “slate switch,” whereby a fraudulent spirit medium exchanges slates over the head of the unsuspecting victim. This is the exact method used to defraud Mary Shane.

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prepared sheet received the impression as the victim wrote. The fake medium only needed to get possession of the tablet while the victim folded her message.

When this was done, it was an easy matter for her to leave the room, or have the maid gather up the pads. Taken into another room, plumbago or any dark-colored powder was sprinkled on the wax sheet. This powder sticks in the impressions made in the wax, and the message could be easily read.

The rest was easy for the medium, but hard and pathetic for the victim.



CHAPTER XIII

"MAN WHO CAN NOT DIE!"

IF you saw a man hung—and returned to life—if you were told by a "friend of the dead" that your money would double if "properly invested"—that from being out of work you'd get "the finest job in the world"—what would you do—would you believe him?

More than eleven thousand people contributed to the coffers of "The man who can not die!" Would you?

THE MAN WHO CAN NOT DIE!
SEE HIM HUNG. HE TALKS AFTER DEATH!
LET HIM BRING YOU A MESSAGE
FROM THE DEAD!

The above was part of a huge placard that startled the third class city of Middleboro early this year. Many more phrases, equally unbelievable appeared in large letters. Promises of "The Spirits will foretell your future" and "Employment Guaranteed" were in prominent lines.

"From far-off Burma comes the miracle worker of the Orient" was another catching line. No wonder there wasn't an office that day or home that night in the thriving city of sixty thousand wherein "The man who can not die" was not the sole topic of conversation.

Came the evening when he was to give his first evidence that the spirits were his closest friends. The doors of the Auditorium were opened at seven-thirty, the performance being scheduled to start at eight-thirty, but by

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eight o'clock the fire department ordered the management to stop selling tickets. Too many had already jammed their way in.

Hundreds in the streets were sent home disappointed. For unemployment was rampant in town and the promise of employment drew the crowds even as a magnet draws iron.

Inside the masses shouted and called, but the curtain remained down until exactly eight-thirty. Then every light in the house was extinguished and in place of the white theater lights an unearthly green illumination from the balcony arc lamps filled the amphitheater. The audience was awed. A sort of mass hypnotism.

The curtain rose. In the center of the platform was a great gallows. A heavy rope, with a hangman's huge knot in the end, dangled gruesomely from the center of the scaffold. The weirdness of the lights which threw a ghastly green shadow over the gibbet sent a shiver of apprehension down every one's spine.

Suddenly, from the right side of the platform, came a beat of African Tom-Tom drums; the dreary monotony of the cadence added to the ghostly impression.

Then, as the drums stopped with a loud "Thomp," there stepped to the center of the platform the tallest Negroid type ever seen in America. He seemed fully seven feet tall. To add to the effect of his height a turban was wrapped about his head in spiral form and at the very crown of point was a flashing red stone.

"My friends," he declared in an odd English accent, "you see before you Ben Mohamet Abu of the tribe of Sengeni, the medicine men of Burma. I was persuaded to come to America by my good friends, Prof. and

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Madame Fitzhugh, famous spiritualistic mediums, to whom I now introduce you."

As a cue on a stage, out stepped a man dressed in tropical white clothes. Fitzhugh wore a monocle and sun shade hat to lend atmosphere to his clothes and his wife heightened the effect with a huge sun umbrella which she placed in the shadow of the scaffold.

Ben Mohamet Abu took up his chain of talk as the mediums acknowledged the applause.

"These mediums," he continued in his jumbly phrasing, "will bring messages to you, from me after I am what you people call 'dead.' The madame will go among you and ask you to write messages to the dear departed that you know. Any, now in the spirit world, may be addressed. While she is doing that, Prof. Fitzhugh with the kind assistance of some of you strong men out there will hand me to that gallows as though I were a criminal of the worst type.

"Some mediums receive messages from the spirits while in a trance. I can not do this. I must actually be in that state called 'dead.' You will find that my answers which you will receive through Madame Fitzhugh are correct and true. I want you all to keep perfectly still while I am being hung.

"Madame Fitzhugh, will you please go among the audience and have the questions written. Remember my friends, let no one see what you write. Personally keep the paper on which you write at all times. Fold it, conceal it, do what you will with it, but let no one see it. I now retire to prepare for the ordeal."

As Madame Fitzhugh went into the audience, she was joined by four girls, all of whom were also carrying paper on similar boards. The medium spoke.

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"The paper attached to this board, is ordinary writing paper. You will note that it is perforated in five places so that each huge sheet contains enough paper on which six individuals may write their individual messages to the dead.

"We have one hundred of these boards so that we could answer six hundred questions tonight, but as that would be too great a strain on Ben Mohamet Abu, we will use only fifty. That means we will bring answers from the spirits to three hundred individual questions.

"Any whose questions we do not reach please call again tomorrow. There is nothing prepared about the paper, and you need not be afraid to use it. However, if you prefer, use your own paper. Simply tear off the perforated piece we supply and place your own paper on the board to make your writing easier."

As she finished talking the boards and paper were distributed. The house lights were turned on again and the curtain fell. A buzz of excited "What shall I write whispered to wife, sweetheart or friend, swept through the audience.

The medium and her assistants quickly saw all the boards were passed out and as the last one in each aisle tore off the last piece of perforated paper, took back the blank wooden boards.

The curtain rose and Madame Fitzhugh returned to the platform. The girl assistants had gone, taking the boards with them. The medium raised her hand for silence.

"You now have had an opportunity," she said, "to get in direct touch with the spirits. Keep tight hold on your questions. For we are ready to proceed with the most important part of the program."

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Abu and Prof. Fitzhugh came on the platform arm in arm. The Burmese wore but a loin cloth. Marching to the gallows they stopped. Abu faced the audience.

"Let the lights change," he commanded and again the white lights went out and the green ghastly ones returned. In stilted English he continued:

"I asked for volunteers a few moments ago. Let them come right up. I warrant they will not be made fun of by me, for this is a serious business. All I want them to do is to assist in hanging me. Do not be afraid. I have gone through this thousands of times and Prof. Fitzhugh will guarantee them against damages if I do not recover from the 'death' spell."

It was difficult to obtain assistants, but after much coaxing five huskies, whom every one in the auditorium seemed to know, mounted the platform. Fitzhugh introduced Abu to each and explained their work.

Standing directly under the gallows Abu bowed to the audience and motioned to Fitzhugh to proceed. The medium released a catch that brought the heavy rope with the huge hangman's noose, which had hung in sight from the beginning, to the floor of the platform.

He then had one of his volunteer assistants slowly walk away with the rope taking up the slack until the noose was neck high to Abu.

The medium placed the knot about the neck of the Burmese! A shiver went through the audience. It was almost an audible protest.

Madame Fitzhugh brought the black hood customarily placed on all condemned men's heads. She dropped it on Abu's head.

The green lights seemed to flicker, their ghostly hues

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bringing suppressed nervous laughter, fear or excitement to every one.

Abu lifted his hands to adjust the noose. As he did so, Fitzhugh announced:

"You saw the noose about Abu's neck. We now will tie his hands behind his back so he can not touch the rope. When I give the signal you men pull him up with a jerk so he immediately swings high from the floor.

"Thus there is no pain. As he swings free, note the convulsions through which he goes. A condemned man is allowed to hang five minutes after he is dead. Abu will hang for fifteen! We will then cut him down.

"If he can answer through Madame Fitzhugh, all the three hundred questions asked in the fifteen minutes, well and good. If not, return tomorrow. If the questions asked are too personal, private readings can be had here late tonight or tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. The fee is ten dollars per question."

Turning to Abu, Fitzhugh said:

"Are you ready to commit yourself to the spirits?"

A tap of Abu's foot!

"Shall we proceed?"

A tap of Abu's foot!

Taking the rope between his hands the medium spread the assistants out behind him, each holding part of the rope. The five men resembled a tug of war team.

"Pull!" cried the medium.

With a heave the men yanked!

The body flew high in the air. It swung and contorted! The black masked figure was hung!

The reaction on the onlookers was tremendous. A woman screamed. Another giggled hysterically.

The audience's comments were getting louder and

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louder. They saw what they had come to see—yet protested.

They were watching something unreal, uncanny, unbelievable, this hanging of a fellow being.

Fitzhugh stopped the commotion with an uplifted hand.

"Quiet friends," he commanded. "What would mean another's death is but Abu's ascendancy to the spirits."

Slowly the audience became calm. Madame Fitzhugh stepped forward beside her husband. She smiled, but the green shadows cast by the sun had made her entire appearance fearsome and her grin ghastly and malignant.

"Madame Fitzhugh will compose herself in the shadow of the gallows," the medium continued, "and will begin to answer all the questions as quickly as possible."

Suiting the action to the word Madame Fitzhugh picked up a chair and placed it beneath the swinging body.

"Lights," she cried.

The entire auditorium was darkened momentarily and in place of the sickish, uncanny green lights came a brilliant soft illumination such as only can be given by the large white-blue Mazda lamps.

Quickly the medium answered question after question. For more than the allotted fifteen minutes she called out answers to questions that the audience had written on the paper, folded and hidden.

In between answers every now and then the medium called attention to the body hung in the air above her. She repeated time and time again that Abu was getting both questions and answers through the aid of the spirits and she in turn, because she was closely attuned mentally to the Burmese, was transmitting them.

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Suddenly she stopped answering questions. She walked to the front of the platform and stated:

"There will be no more public readings tonight. If any one did not get an answer to the question asked, come again tomorrow. However, if you did receive an answer, and want more details, Abu, Prof. Fitzhugh and myself for a very small fee, only ten dollars, will give you a private reading after the curtain falls, or in the morning after ten o'clock.

"Now we will have the green lights of jade fall again, and visibly bring back to you the man who can not die, the man you saw hung—yet whom you will see alive again, here before your very eyes.

"Lights!"

Again the platform was dark for a second and again the green hues took the place of the white lights.

Crossing to where the rope was fastened to the gallows Fitzhugh loosened the knots. Holding the rope tightly he slowly walked toward the swinging body. As the slack was played out, the black masked figure slowly fell to the floor.

The audience was gasping. Half of the women were breathless with pent up emotions, some were hysterically standing up in their seats, others were laughing nervously, proclaiming "it's a fake." Men were uncertain what to do.

Both mediums leaned over the figure and Fitzhugh slowly drew off the black mask. Madame Fitzhugh took the head of the "hung" man on her lap and began washing his face with cold water as Fitzhugh slid the noose from about Abu's neck.

The Burmese laid motionless and white. Slowly as Madame Fitzhugh continued to run the wet towel over

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his face, the color returned. He moved, half rose and then fell back. The audience was breathless. Again Abu partly rose from the floor. He seemed to fall back, but steadied himself and with the aid of both mediums stood up.

Shaking and rolling his head, even as a dog throws off water after it has been swimming, the Burmese walked to the center of the platform. A storm of applause which made the very rafters of the auditorium ring, went up. The audience had seen a man hung, and then come back to life!

Bowing again and again, as the ovation died down, Abu repeated the announcement of Madame Fitzhugh that there would be private readings immediately following the fall of the curtain.

II

In the crowd was Charles Prettyman, a journeyman carpenter, and his wife Alice. No longer young, they had felt the lack of steady work, for the more youthful and stronger carpenters were getting first call on the few construction jobs in town. And the promise of the "friend of the dead" to find work for him was too great a lure to keep them away.

The Prettymans were old residents, owned "quite a piece of property north of town" and had almost twenty thousand dollars in the Building and Loan, both of which facts gave them a feeling of being substantial citizens. But the dearth of steady work worried them, for they were frugal by nature and hated to touch any of their savings.

It so happened that one of the questions that Madame

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Fitzhugh answered was one Prettyman wrote, "Will there be a renewal of building here soon?"

The medium replied, "There will be considerable building here shortly. In particular there is one development that will be under way soon in which you can partake."

This answer whetted the appetite of the carpenter and his wife and we find them in the crowds that waited after the audience filed out. Almost one hundred men and women wanted "private readings" and when Madame Fitzhugh stated "please move down front, we will take you in order," the rush resembled a football game.

On one side of the platform sat Abu, in the center was Madame Fitzhugh and to the right the professor. A short stairway was placed in the middle of the auditorium by using the two side passageways. The three mediums rapidly went through the reception ceremonies, which, of course, included the acceptance of ten dollars from all those who wished questions answered.

When it finally came to Prettyman's turn, he was sent to Madame Fitzhugh's table. Here, behind a screen, the medium asked for details of what bothered him.

"I want to know more about that development you mentioned in answer to my question about when building will be resumed here. I can use some of the carpenter work."

Adroit questioning brought out the details of the financial affairs of the carpenter's family and an appointment was made for the morrow when Prof. Fitzhugh and Abu himself would call at the Prettyman home.

Ten o'clock in the morning found the Burmese and the medium at Prettyman's. They were welcome even as a farmer welcomes rain after a dry spell.

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Ushered into the parlor the mediums decided, after hearing more details of the Prettyman's property holdings to hold a seance then and now.

The usual slate manipulations (explained in previous chapters) proved the spirits were in favor of the Prettyman family's fortunes doubling, and fully half an hour was spent further pointing out the friendliness of "the man who can not die" to the carpenter.

Prettyman needed little conversion or proof of the supernatural powers of the mediums, for hadn't he seen Abu die only last evening—and hadn't he seen him restored to life?

To make a long story short, Prettyman assigned ten thousand dollars of his Building and Loan Stock to Fitzhugh as an investment in a new building development soon to be started in town—and this development was to consist of hundreds of homes erected for the followers of Spiritualism.

Abu said he intended to make the home of his followers in town, erecting a huge cult Temple, and that to show his appreciation of Prettyman's good faith, he would sign a contract at once giving him the contractor's work for all carpentry to be done on the Temple, as well as the homes in the new development.

Little over a week went by when Prettyman was called by the president of the Building and Loan to explain that while the transfer of the stock to Fitzhugh had been made, the situation should be looked into. More than thirty people had done likewise, he said.

Prettyman met with dozens of others in the Building and Loan offices. Also present were the district attorney and chief of police.

Detectives sent to bring the three mediums to the

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gathering returned empty handed. The total loss in Middleboro was \$110,000.

Later developments indicate that the "mediums" were nothing but three clever crooks and "confidence workers" who had been discharged from a circus for crookedness. Thousands and thousands of dollars had been stolen by this "man who can not die" and his accomplices, reports said. At this writing warrants were out for them in many states, but the trio seemed to have dropped out of existence.

III

There is no question but that every reader is exclaiming "He was hung. Why didn't he die?"

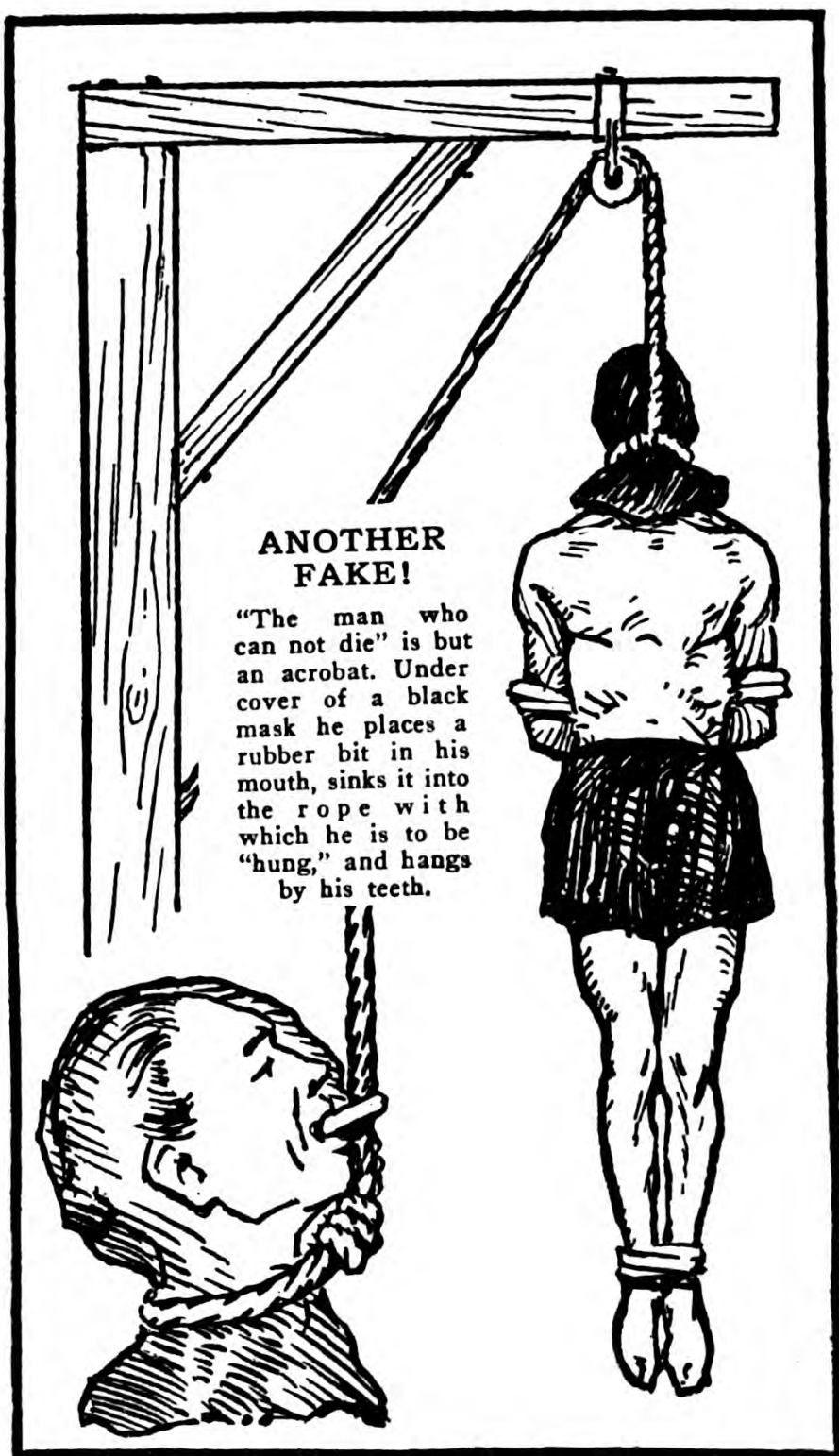
The English vocabulary can not describe the simplicity of the hanging—nor the genius of the brain that devised this diabolical means of impressing the credulous and gullible.

Not the illustration on page 273. The rope and gallows are absolutely the same as those used by hangmen in executions—but in the noose and black mask lies the secret. And only a few lines are needed to give away the whole fraud!

When the black mask was put on Abu's head, if you recall, he raised his hands inside the cloth covering, as though to straighten out the noose. He did this—but when he put his right hand up, he took from a hidden pocket in the mask an apparatus known in circus parlance as a "tooth-bit." A "tooth-bit" is that piece of hard rubber and metal clip circus acrobats use in their mouths when doing "Flying Butterfly" acts. You have seen such performances hundreds of times, no doubt.

Abu, former circus performer, placed the "tooth-bit"

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ANOTHER FAKE!

"The man who can not die" is but an acrobat. Under cover of a black mask he places a rubber bit in his mouth, sinks it into the rope with which he is to be "hung," and hangs by his teeth.

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in his mouth, moved the noose over from behind his ear, inserted the metal clip attached to the mouth piece deeply in between the strands of the rope, and all was ready for him to be "hung!"

His cue to be ready to be swung off the ground was the second question asked. The tap of his foot was his signal that he was set.

The tying of his hands and the contortions of the body were all for effect. Just as you've seen a circus performer swing when he was suspended only by his teeth holding him from being dashed to the ground, so did Abu swing—except you couldn't see the neck "tooth-bit."

You may say "No circus performer ever hung that long in air suspended only by his teeth." You are right. Neither did Abu!

If you recall when Madame Fitzhugh changed the lights from green to white, there was a moment when the house was dark. In that moment, Abu was swung back of the black background and a dummy with legs of wax painted exactly to resemble Abu, was swung back in his place! Abu swung by his teeth hardly more than three minutes, an easy length of time for a trained acrobat.

When at the end of the question answering program the lights were changed back to green from white, again there was a moment's solid darkness. That was when Abu was swung back.

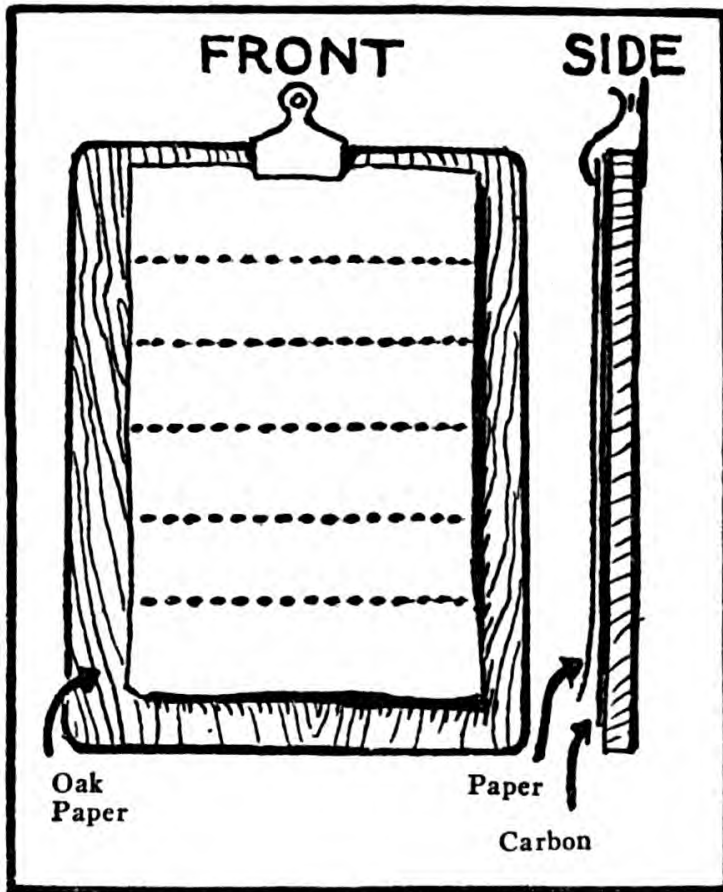
The bathing of his face and his "weakness after the ordeal" was nothing but showmanship.

Now that you know how Abu was "hung" perhaps you'd like to know how the questions were known to the trickers. Recall that the paper was never in the hands of the fake mediums. Remember that they never touched or saw the questions—yet they gave the answers. Phe-

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nomenal? Hardly, except that people, as Barnum said, "like to be fooled."

The wood clip file was not as innocuous as it looked. If a medium hands you a very unsuspecting looking device, keep in mind that the more innocent it appears, the more apt it is to be "phoney."



Such was the case with the clip file. Note the illustrations on this page. The bottom of the board was solid oak and the clip at the top was real metal, but there the genuine materials ceased.

The construction and use of a fake clip board (if you wish to make one) is as follows:

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Buy a regular clip board at any stationery store. Take it to a carpenter and explain you want him to duplicate it exactly, except that he should leave a $\frac{3}{8}$ inch hollow space all around. To fit this, he should make a frame that is absolutely tight, no edges where it joins the main piece to be seen. That ends the carpenter's work.

Buy a sheet of oak-colored wood grain paper. Then paste this over the frame.

In the base lay a piece of twenty pound white bond paper. On top of this place a piece of "Pencil Ditto Paper" or any good heavy carbon paper that makes an impression no matter how lightly it is touched.

Place the frame with the wood-grained paper in place over the carbon and bond paper. This will make an absolutely "solid wood appearance when correctly done."

One more preparation and you are finished. On the original clip board you bought for a sample, you will probably find a label of either the manufacturers or the stationer from whom you bought it. Soak this off carefully with warm water. Paste it on the imitation board to "prove" your board is genuine by innuendo.

When the ordinary paper is placed under the clip, you are ready to be a "mind reader." When the victim of the stunt writes, obviously everything he or she writes goes through the wood-grained paper into the carbon and then on the white bond paper.

After the questions are written and kept by the dupe, all you have to do is to innocently take back the board. Carelessly throw it to one side and proceed to talk on any subject you wish to "stall" for them.

While this is going on, a friend who acts as an assistant takes the board to another room, pries up the frame of the false bottom, and takes out the carbon paper. He

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then reads the carbon impression of the question on the concealed bond paper.

All that now remains is for the assistant to copy the questions on a very small piece of paper, and innocently saunter back into the room where you are posing as a "mind reader." When he gets close to you, stop talking and drop your handkerchief on the floor. The assistant stoops and picks it up and returns it to you. When he hands you the handkerchief he also hands you the piece of paper on which he has copied the questions.

With the questions in your possession, mop your brow with the handkerchief and with one hand open the paper on which the assistant has written. You thus read the questions; every time you mop your brow you are reading another question. It is impossible to be caught at this if you are careful.

The clip board method of getting messages, years ago a legitimate stage mind reader's effect, was stolen by fraudulent spirit mediums and fortune tellers, but is no longer used by magicians. It is one of the most common methods in use today by "Spook Crooks." Thousands of people have been fooled and defrauded by this method. After obtaining the questions, any answers suffice—guesses please the populace, as long as they are so worded the victim can read 'the truth' in them.

The Fitzhughs, obtaining the questions in this fashion, delivered the answers "from the spirits" without further ado. Abu was only part of a picture—his "death" and "return to life" being but showmanship to put a "punch" in an old, old stunt of frauds.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DEAD CAN NOT SPEAK

"AND I solemnly charge you jurors to disregard any testimony relative to the corpse returning to life, or any trickery which may have given that effect, but merely to decide if the document said to be the last will and testament of George Boss is just that, and if you settle that it be, if it were obtained through fraud or undue influence, or not."

As the jurors filed out of the little court room in a New England state and Judge Harry Andrews left the bench, a buzz of conversation swept the chambers of justice, for the trial involved the will of the late hardware manufacturer in which the \$375,000 estate, left the widow, was at stake.

It was protested that the will was executed under duress, and signed by fraud.

While waiting for the jurors to return with their verdict, let us review the testimony in which the question "the dead can not return to life" was disregarded by the judge in his charge to the jury, and explain one of the most unique settings ever used by fraudulent Spiritualists, as well as the events leading up to the trial.

Some eighty years ago to Abner and Abigail Boss was born a son, George. The Revolutionary lineage was thus to be continued. "For nigh on to seventy years" before George arrived, the Boss family had tilled the soil and were as much a part of Hillsboro as the very ground

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itself, and the new heir was welcomed with New England hospitality.

George was shrewd and by the time he was twenty-six, after clerking in the general store, he made a deal with the local blacksmith, to sell "fixings" to the farmers. Today we call those "fixings" hardware. After his parents died he disposed of all the realty holdings and opened a store of his own. He married at forty and had one son George, Jr.

From then on, with the trend more and more to "boughten things" rather than the home made ones, George flourished. His store grew larger and soon there was a factory which he had erected. With the Spanish American War came his first real wealth, for he made bayonets. Then the World War and his little factory blossomed out to a big one.

But the World War brought him sorrow that even his love of money could not conquer—George, Jr. was killed in France and on the day that the fateful envelope arrived from the War Department with the star above the address, George Sr. was 67 years old.

Now that you have this background, let the tale of "the living dead" begin.

Boss erected a wonderful drinking fountain in the town square to the memory of his son. The town sorrowed with him until the story of the lonely rich widower, who was lavishing his money in memory of his boy, reached an "Inner Circle" of Spiritualists in Boston. Circular after circular filled the old man's mail, for while his years were but 67, since his boy's death he was aging rapidly.

At first he paid little attention to the stories of com-

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munication between the living and the dead, but as drops of water wash any granite, so did these tales affect him.

Unknown to his associates, or his friends, two years after his boy's death he went to Boston and attended a seance. He was (he thought) unknown to any of the people present but the medium, a Madam Hunter, brought him a message "direct from some youngish man I see in uniform somewhere in France."

Boss was impressed and continued to attend the seances for many years which were without spirit manifestation or the actual bringing of the "body" of the ghost of the room. Always the medium had a message from his son. Finally, late in 1928, eight years after he had been "converted" to spiritualism, Boss invited the entire staff of the "church" to his backhills home.

The mediums were introduced to every one in town worthwhile, and some not so worthwhile, for Boss was trying to convert the entire little village to his new religion. The ministers were up in arms over the invasion of "interlopers" as they called the mediums, but to no good, for Boss' word was law in many quarters. He held too many mortgages not to be catered to.

In June of 1928, when he was 78 years old, a demure little widow was introduced to him. Madam Hunter presented her as Alice Carey from New Hampshire, a sincere believer in spiritualism and also one in whose presence "the ghosts were pleased to come." As Boss had been begging Madam Hunter to bring his boy to him for many years, the very fact that Mrs. Carey was one to whom the spirits would come made her a welcome addition to the circle that gathered at his home for seances.

Mrs. Carey moved into the Boss menage and immediately began to cater to the old man. She made herself

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almost indispensable when one evening she felt an "urge." The spirits were about to appear, maybe even George would come, she said.

A hurried message to Madam Hunter and the few in the "circle" and soon the front room of Boss' home was filled with the believers. The medium arranged that a screen be placed about one corner of the room and a chair be placed in it. Then directly in front of the screen she arranged the chairs in which the others should sit.

"I must be tied to the chair," the medium said, "so that the spirits will know I am secure and cannot harm them. Being tied will also convince you that the spirit, if it comes, is truly a spirit and not a trick."

Boss protested he knew it would not be a trick, but the medium insisted. So she was carefully tied to the chair, and the screen placed about it. The lights were all carefully extinguished. The room was in almost complete darkness.

Boss seated directly before the screen began to tremble as though he had the ague. Mrs. Carey petted his hand several times and finally held it. Like two school children this couple, one well past middle age, the other almost senile were holding hands.

Intense silence and darkness. A moan from behind the screen. A groan and a strange flashing light, as though it were the Star of Bethlehem, appeared directly above the screen. The star vanished in mid air and a strange crescent shaped design took its place. That vanished and there came a cross in its place.

The air above the cabinet was filled with alternately flashing lights. The spirits were coming, Mrs. Carey murmured, as she pressed the old man's hand harder and harder.

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The screen fell with a crash! The lights vanished and in their place was a shadowy figure of a soldier in uniform.

Boss cried:

"My boy, my son."

Overcome by emotion he stared at the apparition which came slowly toward him.

Boss stretched his hands to embrace the spirit of his boy, but Mrs. Carey restrained him.

"Don't touch him, he'll vanish," she hissed.

Boss leaned back in his chair. He dreaded to touch the spirit for he wanted his boy to stay with him always but how he longed to embrace him! The figure stood before him. A green ghastly, ghostly light illuminated his features. It spoke:

"My father, I come from Spirit Land to see you. Many times when I was sending you messages I wanted to pierce the veil and come to you, but there never was any one present with power enough to bring me to the Earth Vale. I go now, but will return."

The spirit vanished. It was gone. In the dim light the screen was soon replaced. Mrs. Carey turned to Boss and exclaimed:

"Oh, I am so happy your boy came to you, I do hope that something like this will happen every night."

As she finished speaking the lights were turned on and it was seen that the screen was in place again and as it was taken away, it was also noted that the medium was still securely tied.

The ties were cut and Madam Hunter rose from the chair in apparently the most weakened condition. She staggered and asked for a drink of water. This brought,

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she regained some of her strength and asked if George had come while she was in her trance.

George came again on several nights, and Boss was the happiest man in town. He gave lavish gifts to Madam Hunter and others of her "Inner Circle." He and Mrs. Carey were seen in each other's company constantly and it surprised no one when in the early part of 1930 they were married.

Mr. and Mrs. Boss were certainly happy together. They took a honeymoon trip together with Madam Hunter and a Prof. Hoffman, the medium's helper, as their guests. On the trip many seances were held and Boss tried to convert all those with whom he came in contact.

The second day after their return home, Madam Hunter said that she had an odd premonition and suggested Boss make his will. This was done. All went well until early last year Boss was taken ill and died suddenly. His body was taken to the town undertaker and Mrs. Boss, née Alice Carey, was most inconsolable.

For two days he lay in the undertaking parlors and then was brought home for the funeral, at the widow's request. In the meantime Mrs. Boss was approached by Madam Hunter, who wanted the newly made widow to sign an agreement that one-half the estate that would be left her be given to her spiritualistic friends.

Mrs. Boss was amazed, for while she had been a confederate of the fake medium in many of her seances to impress the old man, she had grown to genuinely love him.

Instead of Madam Hunter being incensed, she asked:

"If through my powers of communication with the dead, Mr. Boss himself returns to life to tell you how to

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use the money left you, will you then give me half? I do not want this money for myself, but for the cause."

Mrs. Boss was a genuine believer in spiritualism, and in Madam Hunter's powers. When she worked with the fake medium she had done so to "further the cause of the religion" and had no idea of helping defraud the old man whom she later married.

"Yes," the widow agreed. "If George returns to me, whatever he tells me to do I will do."

The medium departed promising to meet Mrs. Boss that evening after the body was brought to the home from whence it was to go to its last resting place.

At ten o'clock that evening Prof. Hoffman and Madam Hunter arrived. Boss was reposing in the beautiful coffin with a benign expression on his face, when Alice and the two mediums entered the parlor. Telling the paid watcher to leave the body, Madam Hunter bent on her knees before the coffin, rapped on it twice and prayed.

"Oh, Great Benefactor, whose flesh is to return to the dust from whence it came, but whose soul and spirit will live forever, return if Thou wilt to this Earth Plane in your own body and speak to us all on the subject of what to do with the earthly wealth thou didst leave behind."

The medium had hardly stopped speaking when the body half rose in the coffin, the head coming out of the half-open casket. It spoke:

"Alice, make me a promise!"

The widow screamed.

"Yes, I promise anything of my husband, but only stay with me."

The corpse continued to speak.

"I am now the living proof that the dead do return. But I can not linger. I must return to the Other World,

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but before I start on my last journey, I want you to promise that one half of whatever I have left you will be given to the cause of Madam Hunter. Do you so promise?"

"Yes," weakly affirmed Alice.

"Good-by, then, forever, my dear. I will return again in spirit but never in person."

The corpse gave a gasp and fell back motionless.

Alice fainted and Madam Hunter and Prof. Hoffman carried her to her room.

After the funeral was over Alice repaired at once to Seth Burns, the attorney who handled all the affairs of the departed. Here the will was read to her and despite the protests of the lawyer that the corpse could not have spoken, one half was assigned at once to Madam Hunter.

A few days after the funeral and the settling of the estate Ed Boss, only relative of the dead man came to town. He saw Burns who told him about the admission of the will to probate and the instant conversion of the funds into cash that followed the probate action.

Suit was brought at once, first to determine the validity of the will; and secondly, to recover the funds.

Madam Hunter had vanished when Burns issued a summons for her as a witness, but Mrs. Boss was on hand for the trial.

The first two days of the suit were taken up by attacks on Mrs. Boss' motives in marrying and her giving the medium half the estate. The next day was devoted to proving the will was signed under fraudulent circumstances and various witnesses introduced, who could tell the truth about the various appearances of the deceased man's son.

Ed Boss had found an actor Ed Farley, by name, in

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Boston who stated on the witness stand that he had been hired by Madam Hunter. His testimony:

"A Madam Hunter came to a small club booking agency and wanted a young experienced actor. She did not state what she wanted him for until after the papers were signed. She then doubled the amount I was to get and explained that Mr. Boss was nearing death, and to make him happy, she wanted to have his son appear before him again.

"I had a picture of him in uniform and if I admit it myself, I am pretty good at make-up. So I fixed myself up to look like Mrs. Boss' son and said my lines just as if I were an actor on the stage. I did this on six nights. After the last performance, if I may call it that, I went back to Boston with \$500. It was the easiest money I ever had made for a week's work."

On cross examination, instead of helping the plaintiff's case, this transpired:

"Did you know you were deluding an old man?"

"Not in the accepted sense of the word. I thought I was making him happy."

"Did you, when you met Mrs. Carey, who later was to become Mrs. Boss, know that she was in the plot?"

"There was no plot and when I met the then Mrs. Carey I was impressed with her sincere love for the old gentleman."

When Farley was dismissed from the stand, Mrs. Boss was called.

"When this corpse came back to life as you say he did, did you believe it was your husband?"

"Not alone did I believe it then, but I believe it now."

"Even though you know now that it was all a fraud?"

"I don't know it was a fraud even now. Nothing has

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been said about his not having come back to life. I knew about Mr. Farley acting as Mr. Boss' son."

A shout threw the courtroom in turmoil. Prof. Hoffman came rushing down the aisle. Running to Ed Boss and his attorney, pushing court attendants away, he began whispering.

Randolph rose.

"If it please the court," he started, "I want to ask permission to stop the cross examination of Mrs. Boss at this stage of the trial and to place Prof. Hoffman on the stand, retaining the right to call Mrs. Boss again after Prof. Hoffman is finished testifying."

"Granted."

"Thank you, your honor. Prof. Hoffman, please take the stand."

After Hoffman was sworn in, the various preliminary questions asked, Randolph proceeded:

"You were one of the conspirators against Mr. Boss, is that not so?"

"Not a conspirator, merely a dupe of Madam Hunter."

"We'll admit the correction. Did Madam Hunter promise, if you would help her, to give you half of whatever she got?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Your honor I object to this testimony," Mrs. Boss' attorney interposed. "It has nothing to do with the point in question, 'is the will already admitted to probate valid.'"

Arguments proceeded for half an hour when Randolph changed his type of questioning.

"You came here of your own free will to testify about the fraud perpetrated on Mr. Boss?"

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"Not on Mr. Boss, on Mrs. Boss!"

"What!"

The courtroom was a seething cauldron of excitement. Order restored, Randolph again proceeded.

"I did not get that. Mrs. Boss was imposed on, you say?"

"Yes, sir. Madam Hunter figured that Mrs. Boss was not going to be the meal ticket for her that the old man had been and framed up to so impress her with her powers of bringing the dead to life, that she pulled a trick on her. She. . ."

"If the court pleases," Randolph stated, "I will like to state that it is my firm belief that Mrs. Boss herself was imposed upon by this missing witness, Madam Hunter, but as that does not affect our case in my opinion, I will permit the witness to tell his story in detail.

"Mr. Hoffman, explain to the court the deception used on Mrs. Boss."

"Well," Hoffman took up the thread of his story, "When the body came to the parlor from the undertaker in the casket, we had planted an actor in the coffin, underneath the dead man."

Hoffman had to stop. The noise of the comments in the crowded courtroom became too great. Quieted again he proceeded:

"We had strapped this actor, not Mr. Farley, but a down and outer, whose name we didn't even know, underneath the body in this fashion (see illustration on page 289) and while it couldn't have been very comfortable for him, it was easy money, for Madam Hunter paid him a thousand dollars for the work.

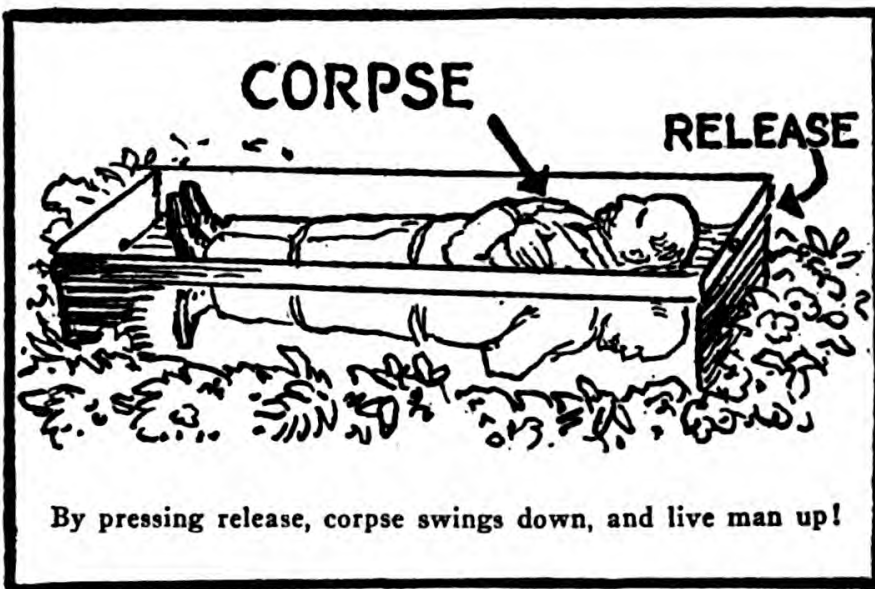
"The cue for him to release the catches and swing the

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body about was Madam Hunter tapping twice on the coffin when she was putting on the praying act. Then afterwards, when we took Mrs. Boss to her room because of her faint, I came down and let him out.

"It will probably hurt Rogers, the undertaker, but I gave him a quart of whiskey and that left me alone in the room with the casket Boss was in long enough to bore air holes in the bottom of it, and take out some of the



stuffing used in coffins. With this actor's aid, I lifted out the body of Mr. Boss and strapped him underneath a board that I put in to divide a false bottom I had personally built in the coffin in the time I had."

This testimony was the climax of the case.

After Randolph ceased the summing up, the defense attorney stated he had nothing to say except that the evidence introduced was his best answer to any charge that Mrs. Boss had tried to influence Mr. Boss in any way.

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The judge then delivered his charge. The jury filed back into the room. Judge Andrews returned to the bench.

The verdict was in favor of Mrs. Boss, all agreeing she was more sinned against than sinning.

Ed Boss came to the side of his dead uncle's wife. For the first time he spoke to her since his appearance in town some days before.

"Aunt," he said, "I am sorry for you. I am sorry I started this suit. I don't want a cent of Uncle George's money, but I do want to run these criminals to earth."

But his aunt shook her head.

"No, my boy," she told him. "They were not criminals. They were misguided spiritualists. I still believe in spiritualism."

Mrs. Boss today is still living in the house to which the old man brought her as a bride. Ed is managing her affairs, but can't control her beliefs despite the frightful experience she went through.

And "somewhere in France," Madam Hunter resides with almost \$200,000, her half of the \$375,000 estate, untouched by the law, but probably her conscience is bothering her.

CHAPTER XV

THE SPIRIT TELEPHONE

ELECTRICITY and hidden telephones, microphones and other modern inventions play a great part in fooling the credulous and superstitious. Here is an example—an expensive lesson!

James Seed had worked hard all his life and accumulated almost a million dollars when he decided to retire from the business world and live out his life in a secluded little village in New England. He became practically a recluse, although his mansion was the show place of the town, until he met a group of alleged Spiritualists.

He was a widower, but deeply in love with a divorcee, Mrs. Dorothy Devoe, whom he had met at a spiritualistic seance in Florida, where he had passed a winter to escape the rigors of New England.

He was quite sure that Dorothy loved him, despite the fact he was nearing eighty, and she was hardly thirty. He invited her, together with several members of the "church" to spend the summer of 1929 with him, and all accepted.

Many seances were held in the Seed home, and messages were brought daily to the old man from his father and mother "in spirit." Let us look in on one of the many of these seances.

A high ceilinged old fashioned parlor with its century old oak floors, the high back red plush chairs, all were

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as traditions of New England demand. Camp chairs, of the type undertakers might furnish, were the only modern influence in the room.

Grouped about a heavy round table were seven people. At the head sat Mr. Seed; to his right was Mrs. Devoe; and elsewhere were Dr. Jack Emory, a spiritualistic minister; Albert Roberten, a nephew of Mrs. Devoe; and three others. The only lights in the room were four dimly lit kerosene lamps.

Mr. Seed sat with bowed head as Dr. Emory murmured a prayer and the rest of the little circle whispered "Amen." Truly, it was a religious gathering.

"Today, my dearly beloved," Dr. Emory stated, "we are gathered to see if the messages that came from the other world, on the slates that Mr. Seed gave us yesterday, can be received again, and this time verbally. I have here a telephone complete with receiver and mouth-piece. Obviously there are no wires attached, for I move it about freely."

"Mr. Seed, let me hand you this telephone."

The old gentleman took the telephone in his hand and examined it curiously. It was the regular telephone apparatus, to all appearances without wires and devoid of any connections. With an air of amazement, he said:

"There certainly are no wires or attachments on this phone. What is it for?"

The gasp of astonishment from Mr. Seed and Mrs. Devoe was audible when Dr. Emory quietly said:

"If you, Mr. Seed, will speak into this telephone, after I have gone in a trance, and ask for a connection with your mother and father in spirit land, they will actually answer you. For you hold a true 'Spirit Telephone.'"

"You actually mean that I can get a connection with

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heaven with this spirit telephone?" slowly asked Seed. "That all I have to do is to ask questions and my parents will answer them? It's impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible to the spirits," was the quiet reply.

Dr. Emory asked for silence, and his head fell forward on his chest as he went into the trance. The silence was intense. Seed kept tight grip on the telephone, receiver clasped to his ear, mouthpiece close to his face.

The medium spoke, without inflection, in a low tone.

"Spirits, who watch over all mortals, today I bring to you the believer with whom we have been conversing for the past weeks. In his hands is the telephone through which you promised me his mother and father would talk. Will you answer any questions that he asks?"

The room was deathly still for a moment. Seed's hands were trembling.

"YES."

Clear and loud from the spirit telephone without wires or connections, came the answer!

The old man was pathetically excited.

"Thank you spirits," the medium intoned. "Now let the questioning begin."

In a voice that trembled, Seed asked:

"Can you hear me, Mother?"

"Yes, son," came back the answer in a crackling voice through the telephone.

"Oh, Mother, I am so happy to talk with you. Tell me if Father is with you, and if you are both well and happy in spirit land."

"We are together, and we both are very happy. I am thankful that I can talk with you."

For several minutes the strange conversation went on.

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Both Father and Mother spoke to the old man, whose elation was growing steadily, and whose fear and dread was vanishing.

Suddenly in the midst of an answer through the spirit telephone, the medium groaned and moaned as though in pain.

"I can not hold the trance much longer," he said. "Please make arrangements for another seance."

"I must go, Mother mine, for the medium who is helping us commune, is feeling the strain," Seed said into the spirit telephone. "Have you any parting message, dear?"

"Only one," came the voice through the telephone. "Marry Dorothy. She loves you and you love her!"

Seed was startled, tried to say something but the line was dead. No answer came.

The medium moaned and groaned constantly. Suddenly he seemed to awaken. Dorothy had walked over to the old man's side and hand in hand the young divorcee and the old gentleman were watching him as he asked what had happened.

Both outlined the communications from the spirit world and the medium was most pleased.

"This is the greatest advance in spirit communication in years," he said. "We'll have to publish this seance and its results to the world."

"Regarding your marriage, I've known for a long time something like this would happen. I am so happy for you both. If you'll get a license I'll be glad to perform the ceremony."

The following day the old multi-millionaire and the young matron were married. It was a wonderful wed-

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ding ceremony. As the words "I pronounce you man and wife" were said, the lights seemed to flicker and from the midst of a huge vase of flowers, which stood on the side of the room, came the words:

"The spirits bless your union!"

The guests were startled, but the believers were made most happy by the words. It proved that the spirits were watching over the couple.

Time went on. More and more messages came over the spirit telephone, and Seed was enjoying life as never before.

However, the over excitement of the spirit communications and his marriage to the young woman proved too much for the old man, and his health broke down. He took to bed, and three days after he had first complained of not feeling well, he was dead.

His will left all to his bride and, in the midst of death, there was rejoicing, for the estate consisted of over \$700,000 in cash and gold bonds. The new Mrs. Seed, who was so quickly widowed, and the spiritualists who had been her friends, danced in the midst of what should have been sorrowing for, dear reader, it had all been a huge conspiracy to get the old man's money.

And these facts would never have been known if a fight had not been started by Seed's only blood relatives, a niece and nephew, when the will had been offered for a probate.

Charging "fraudulent conspiracy" against the widow and "Dr. Emory," who was said to have been a convicted fortune teller, the battle raged for days in the courts.

Let us quote part of a press association story:

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"Interesting sidelights on the spiritualistic 'racket' were thrown in Probate Court here today when Albert Roberten, of Eighth Street, nephew of Mrs. Dorothy Devoe Seed, testified in the contest of the will of the late James Seed, an eccentric recluse of Springfield, which bequeathed Seed's entire estate to his wife, the former Mrs. Dorothy Devoe.

"Roberten's aunt wept when he took the stand to testify in behalf of Mrs. Ethel Edward and George Seed, a niece and nephew of Seed, who are contesting the will. It was brought out later that Roberten was to receive not more than \$25,000 from them, if the contestants break the will, or receive a substantial settlement.

"Counsel for the contestants said that they expect to show through Roberten and others that James Seed had been the victim of a fraudulent conspiracy on the part of his wife, the former Mrs. Devoe and other persons, when he married her, the object of the conspiracy having been to obtain his estate.

"Seed was led to believe, the testimony indicated, that he was receiving messages from his dead mother and father urging him to marry Mrs. Devoe, trust her fully and give her his property.

"Roberten, who was a party to many of the seances, told Judge Joseph Walters, that the messages were all prepared in advance by the gang and transmitted to Seed by trickery.

"Questions to the departed mother and father, written by Seed, were spirited by sleight of hand from before his eyes, and other envelopes substituted, and the answers to them were written by one of the gang on a blackboard, so placed in another room, that only the medium—usually the present Mrs. James Seed—could see them.

"One of the most impressive tricks according to the testimony, was the use of a "spirit telephone" through which communication with the dead was said to be possible. This device, a radio appliance, was used, it was said, to encourage the old man to marry Mrs. Devoe. Seed, moved by all these messages from the other world, finally married the former Mrs. Devoe.

"When his interest seemed to lag, plans were drawn for a great

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"James Seed Spiritualist Temple" to be erected on his property here. When finally the will was executed, giving the entire Seed estate to Seed's wife, Roberten testified there was great rejoicing among the spiritualist gang in their apartment in New York.

"Roberten identified some of the members of the gang as Harris Potter, also known as Prof. Ray; Morris Janes; Daisy Katz; and "Dr." Jack Emory, who was the "minister" in the alleged conspiracy. Emory apparently was the brains of the gang."

The impressive spirit telephone was nothing but a clever adoption of well known radio principles. There are such nefarious devices made up, ready to be sold to fortune tellers, spirit mediums, or others who wish them, by an occult supply house which makes a business of furnishing supplies to those who either prey on the public, or entertain them (as the catalogue states).

Whether a spirit telephone sold by this supply house mentioned was the one used to defraud Mr. Seed is not known, for it was not shown in court. But here is the way a spirit phone works, and if you get a good radio man, and want to spend the money, he can make one for you! (For entertainment purposes only.)

The telephone is a genuine instrument, but the working parts have been taken out, and there has been substituted in the ear piece, a small electro-dynamic receiver unit, which can be bought from the larger radio supply houses. In the handle of the telephone proper are four one and one half volt batteries, which generate the six volts needed to exert the electric field of the speaker.*

This unit weighs about eighteen ounces and its electric consumption is $1\frac{1}{4}$ amperes. Its voice coil impedance is

* The electrical specifications given are exact, having been taken from printed matter describing the "Spirit Telephone."

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15 ohms with a continuous operating capacity of 5 to 7 watts.

Hidden under the dining room table is a two button radio microphone made of high carbon steel. It has a frequency range of from 35 to 6000 cycles, the buttons are of 200 ohms resistance each, and because they are ruggedly built, these microphones eliminate the hissing sound that some of the smaller ones give off. It is only 1 inch thick and but two inches in diameter with two small screw holes at top and bottom. Thus it can readily be attached. Its weight is only one and one half pounds.

The wires from this concealed microphone run underneath the rug to another room where a confederate has the small receiving unit and thus he can hear everything said in the room where the seance takes place. He has a microphone in his room also, and broadcasts back the answers.

When the dupe speaks into the spirit telephone, he really speaks into the unseen microphone under the table. Many times when the victim is more than just two or three feet from the concealed "mike" the voice is lost and the confederate in the other room cannot answer.

In such cases, the fake medium is prepared, and starts extra loud moaning and groaning. He then states that the question will have to be repeated in a louder tone as his "control" reports that it "reached the spirits in a distorted phrasing." Being under tremendous nervous excitement, the dupe repeats the query and thinks nothing of the absurdity.

The "spirit telephone" mentioned above as being sold in an assembled form by a Middle West supply house operates on a slightly different method, inasmuch as in that one the telephone proper houses a microphone

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device. On both the telephones, one may assemble the telephone wires between receiver and mouth piece to act as a miniature aerial.

Fakers are up to the minute. Before the advent of radio, when the desire of the bereaved to bring voices from the spirits was as pronounced as at present, a confederate would be stationed behind a false wall. Through a speaking tube, such as the deaf use, the voices would project into the room with the medium and his dupes.

No matter how new an invention, no matter how far fetched it may be, remember that some fortune telling faker somewhere, will attempt to use it to defraud you. And as "you can't beat a man at his own game" the safest thing you can do is to avoid all fortune tellers like the plague.



CONCLUSION

And now the book is ended. Not that there are not hundreds, yes, even thousands of cases which could be rightfully included, but no book ever printed is large enough to hold the stories of the damage wrought by Spook Crooks who, under their smug guise of possessing supernatural powers, wreck the lives of thousands yearly.

The author hopes that by now the reader realizes

1. Communication between the living and dead is not yet established, ~~although there have been some inexplicable phenomena during seances. Genuine and sincere spiritualists do not give advice on marriage, travel, love affairs, financial matters or business.~~

2. ~~Futures of individuals are not predictable by any process.~~

3. ~~No one possesses supernatural powers. Reading of sealed messages is done by material means, not mystic powers.~~

4. "Miracles" of fortune tellers, fake spirit mediums, mind readers, etc., are merely the application of some sleight-of-hand, chemical process or unseen manipulation.

5. Astrology, numerology, palmistry, tea leaf reading and the other pseudo-sciences are false doctrines invented to impress the credulous and make the operator wealthy.

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